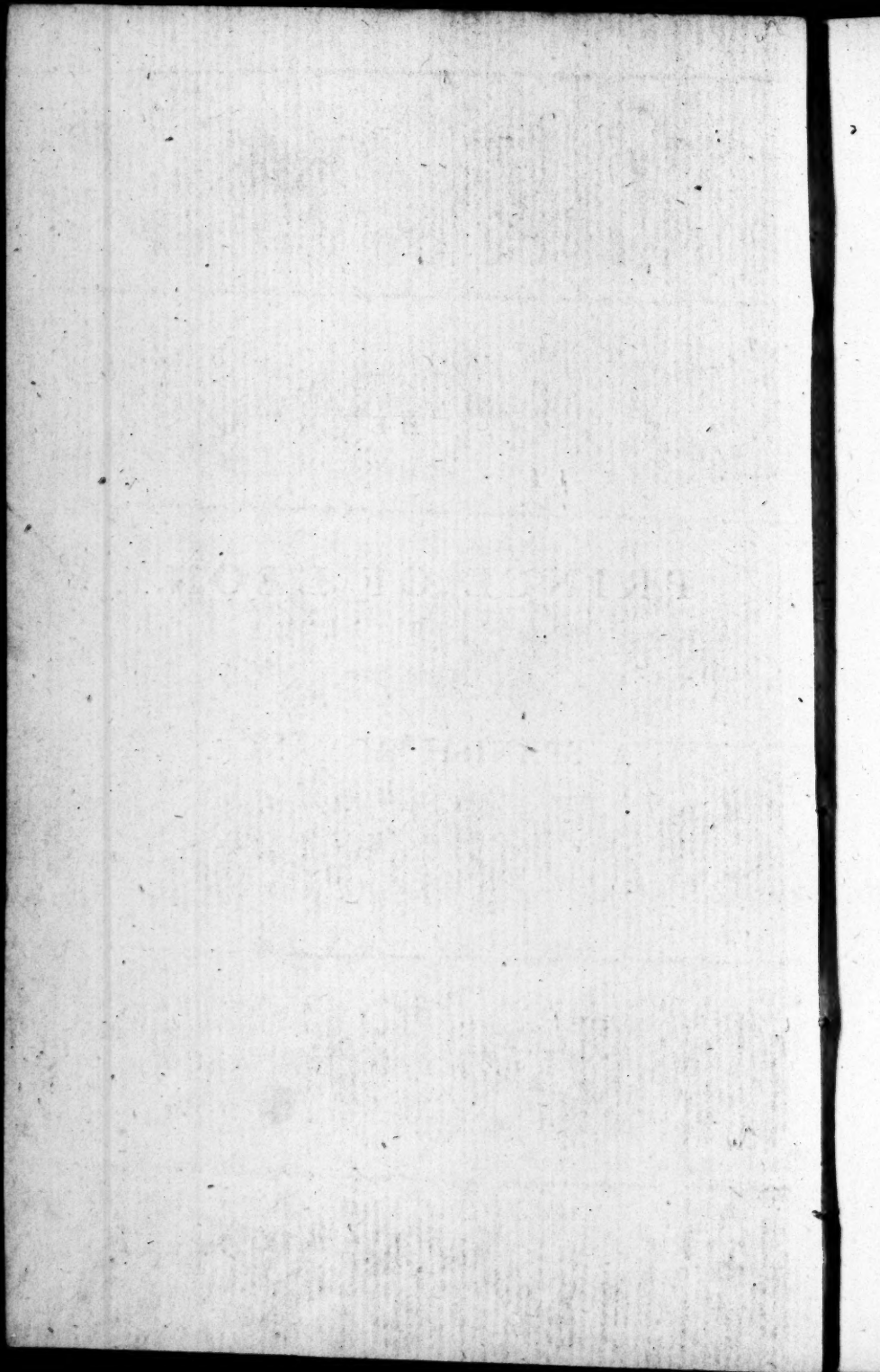


THE
PRINCE OF LEON.

A SPANISH ROMANCE.



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IN TWO VOLUMES.

By Mrs. HARLEY,

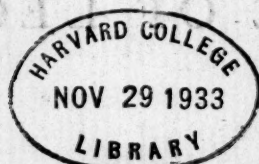
AUTHOR OF

JULIANA ORMESTON, &c.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. BARKER, RUSSELL COURT,
DRURY LANE. 1794.

17436-730



Greenough fund
(2 vols)

ST. MARY'S HARBURY

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— AUTHOR OF —

— ILLUSTRATED BY —

VOL. 1

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. BARNES, FORT ST. COVENTRY

CHURCH LANE

P R E F A C E.

TO send a book into the world without preface or dedication, they say looks very awkward, and does not imply a proper regard for the effusions of one's own brain. As the Spectator once replied, "Much may be said on both sides;" but this I will positively assert, that this said preface or dedication is more formidable to me than the major part of the work itself. Many things and many persons have passed over my imagination, but I could never form them into any connexion, or pitch upon any individual. The common style of dedication is so hackneyed and fulsome, that my pen has rejected the idea, with indignation; and as mine are not works of elaborate wisdom, historical displays of the different productions and countries of the globe, they do not want a

commentary preface prefixed to them, which often tires and seldom pleases. I will then say no more than that all I aim at is, to blend morals with amusements, and define the rewards of virtue and vice.

If in the grateful breast they should excite the commission of one good action, or repel one intended bad one, I shall think my labours amply recompensed.

M. HARLEY.

THE

THE
PRINCE OF LEON.

A SPANISH ROMANCE.

ALPHONSO, king of Leon, ascended the throne bravely regained by his ancestors from the Moors, but was deprived of existence, and his crown, ere he had reigned three years over a people blind to the many advantages, and ungrateful for the many signal benefits heaped on them by his royal munificence and paternal care. Sancho, surnamed the Proud, had the audacity to raise his aspiring thoughts to the very throne of his master; a master with whom he was edu-

cated in the strictest habits of friendship, and who had loaded him with his choicest favours; in a moment of unsuspecting security he attempted, and succeeded but too well, the army declared for him; the work of death began at the usurper's nod. Ah, daring regicide! stop thy atrocious purpose, embroil not thy hands in the blood of a king, whose person should be rendered more sacred by his unbounded goodness. Remember, that there is a day of retribution, that royalty is delegated by Heaven, and that Heaven will at that day demand thy everlasting punishment, as the forfeit of thy crime.

Sainted Alphonso, the virtuous are not always rewarded here, but a glorious hereafter, proportioned to their desert, await the righteous martyrs; such was thy faith, when the poniard of the midnight ruffian struck at thy heart. Retired to his closet, this exemplary king was wasting the midnight hours in redressing some grievances

grievances his people had complained of. Suddenly a confused noise interrupted his studies ; the king sent a page to enquire the cause. He returned no more. It advanced still nearer, more seriously alarmed, he went himself ; crossing the staircase he beheld his queen, his beloved Isabella, pale and bleeding, rushing with eager haste to seek him ; she reclined trembling in his arms, and with difficulty articulated, " Fly, my king, my husband, treason is in the palace, mine is the first of royal blood the murderers have shed ; fly, lest the blind impulse of a moment should deprive Leon of a just and worthy king ; fly, and strive to save our helpless babe."

Overpowered with grief and amazement, the unhappy monarch had no longer power to strive for his safety, he still supported and embraced in the tenderest manner the dying queen, who continued, when speech

had failed, to exhort him by signs to seek his safety in flight.

Alas, it was already too late, the guardian angel of Leon slumbered o'er his charge, and awoke only to lament its misfortunes.

Those that had the care of the royal babe, followed the footsteps which the blood of their queen and some of her faithful attendants had too plainly traced, they reached the sanguined spot just as their royal mistress breathed her last, and a party of assassins at that moment ascending the staircase, the unfortunate and afflicted king beheld an hundred swords pointed instantaneously at his breast. Grown desperate, with one hand he caught the infant Carlos, and with the other endeavoured to defend him against the numbers who seemed to dispute with each other the bloody honours they expected to reap from his murder. He fell, pierced with
many

many wounds, and his last groan seemed to penetrate with remorse his very assassins, they looked at each other with horror, and separated in silence, as if they feared their own self-reproaches for the atrocious deed they had just committed.

All was soon hushed, not one dared to revive the scene of blood he had been accessory in forming; the gloomy calm of night, the dim light reflected from the glimmering half-extinguished lamps, contributed to heighten the horrors they gave light to. The count Ramirez de Mendoza, distantly related to the usurper, but married to a cousin of Alphonso, disturbed by the noise which prevailed throughout the city (the cause of which they had long secretly feared) was induced by the tears of his wife and his own humanity to enter in disguise the deserted palace, in hopes of effecting the escape, or aiding the preservation of some of the royal sufferers. Wrapped in a large mantle, he

safely explored the desolated mansion ; he found the poor remains of majesty, and dropt a pious tear over the sacred relics. He drew the child from the cold grasp of Alphonso, and finding it still breathed, he was transported with those sensations of joy, the good can only know, and kneeling with enthusiastic fervor by the side of the royal corpses, he vowed to that God whose aid he implored, to assist the benevolent purpose of his soul, to allow him to protect his prince, the offspring of his benefactor, from those whose ambition and cruelty knew not how to pity, and to whom his infant eyes and innocent hands would be raised in vain. He took from the finger of Alphonso the royal signet, and beholding his dagger, bore it also away. These are thy treasures, Carlos, cried he, pressing the infant to his bosom, may they one day ascertain thy birth, and help thee to punish the destroyer of thy father.

He

He covered the prize with his mantle, and favoured by the darkness and the confusion of the city, escaped without notice to his own house. He found Donna Almeria, his wife, in the most cruel agitation ; her loyalty, and indeed inclination, had attached her to the queen, relationship and esteem to Alphonso. The cries she had heard from the palace, the awful stillness that succeeded, the long absence of her husband, all conspired to augment her uneasiness, and hasten her approaching labour.

The moment shortly arrived when she was to doubt no more ; the count returned, his countenance was pale and sad, the tear of regret yet trembled in his eye. Our king ! exclaimed the countess, half raising her hands clasped together in an agony, our king !

The tear dropped from his eye—it fell on the hand of Almeria. My friend,
my

my queen! she continued—ah, let me seek the friend of my soul. He gently restrained her emotion, opened his mantle, and laid the child upon a cushion before her. Dear Almeria, cried he, clasping her in his arms, compose yourself, exert every effort to preserve all that remains of friends so justly dear — he could utter no more. The countess raised her hands and eyes to heaven, with an energy peculiar to herself, and after offering up an internal oraison for her unfortunate friends, she turned her attention to the infant, in whose tender plaints she almost forgot her encreasing pains; its misfortunes riveted her affection, and excited her tears.

What a retrospect!——an unfortunate babe, dependent on those it was born to command, and even owing life to a branch of that ambitious house, which caused it to feel in the cradle the bitter effects of lawless treachery.

Ramirez

Ramirez however did not in the least resemble his kinsman; it is almost needless to remark, after the preceding example, that he was generous, humane and just; the national pride of his countrymen was unknown to him, he lived in the utmost splendor, yet was easy of access to the poorest of his vassals, and never did the petitioner or unfortunate go from his gate unrelieved. Donna Almeria, his wife, from a happy similitude of disposition, lived in the utmost harmony with him, but being allied to royalty, it is not to be wondered at, that the countess now and then felt the dignity and superiority of her rank; it might indeed be seen in her very form, which was majesty itself; yet whilst her deportment inspired awe, there was a feminine sweetness in her countenance, which tempered an air bordering upon haughtiness.

The count adored her, but though she had a great ascendancy over his actions,
yet

yet not all her persuasions, joined to the solicitations of the king, could ever induce him to enter into political intrigues, or concern himself with business of state.

A character so universally good as that of Ramirez, could not be seen without envy by the wicked; and the usurper finding all his arts vain to induce him to grant to him what he had refused to Alphonso, and despairing of either his countenance to the measure he had adopted, or his advice how to secure his ill-gotten power, ceased to importune him, but regarding him with a jealous and apprehensive eye, determined to seize the first occasion to rid himself of one whose power, if he chose to exert himself, might prove formidable.

The count de Ramirez was not happy in every thing, he had a sister who was the most amiable of women, sensible, penetrating; possessed of a soul formed with every tender, every endearing passion of humanity

humanity and benevolence. This lady was married to Gonsalvez de Carma, who following the fortunes of Sancho, became at his elevation prime minister, a post well adapted to his genius and inclination. He was young, possessed of great personal perfections; but his mind was the receptacle of every vice. Bold, assuming, ambitious, and cruel, yet he hid all these imperfections under the mark of probity and justice; in fine, he was so complete an adept in dissimulation, that Ramirez rejoiced at his selecting his sister from amidst the numbers who would have thought themselves honoured by his alliance. I have already said he was handsome, and prided himself infinitely upon being thought so. His lady could not boast of any attractions of that nature, being rather deformed, but her mind was a treasure he was unworthy of possessing.

Her brother found soon after her marriage, that he had been deceived, and
that

that the ideas of Gonfálvez were far from coinciding with his own.

A similar discovery made the life of Felicia extremely irksome, particularly at the present moment, for as long as Alphonso reigned quietly over Leon, their difference of opinion seemed very trifling; but from the moment discord extended her baleful influence, the domestic troubles of Felicia increased.

De Carma had long treated her with indifference, he now expressed open dislike, and took no pains to conceal his numerous infidelities from her knowledge. The unfortunate Felicia possessed the quickest sensibility, and felt the misery of her destiny with every possible aggravation. She feared to complain of his behaviour, so doubly cruel to a heart formed to constitute in the highest degree conjugal felicity. Alas, she now felt but the beginning of sorrows which strengthened with the coming

ing

ing years. Her brother often pressed her to confide to his fraternal breast her griefs, let them be what they would, but she nobly refused, and always with a melancholy smile evaded any complaint, which could only produce a quarrel, and avail her nothing.

But to resume the thread of our narrative, and follow the infant prince of Leon—the generous Ramirez wished to take every possible means of preventing the discovery of the birth of the babe he had so fortunately saved; he trembled with apprehension, well knowing the art of those he had to encounter. Every scheme suggested by the countess and her faithful attendants were rejected, from the probability of detection. During their consultation, the pains of the countess increased, and in a short time she brought into the world a girl.

As

As soon as she was able to speak, she sent for the count, and thus addressed him : I am well aware that the proposal I am going to offer, will be by many considered as cruel and unnatural, but when I reflect on the conscious pleasure, the secret delight resulting from benevolence, my resolution revives, and I no longer hesitate to declare it before you, knowing as I do your virtues.

I am become a mother after a union of some years, during which Heaven has denied me that blessing, so earnestly implored ; I have now obtained it, but yet circumstanced as we are, shall I, or ought I to be thought superstitious, in thinking that this blessing is sent us from above, to put our virtues to the proof, and that we must act so as to merit its future favours. The secret we wish to conceal is known only to ourselves and two others ; on them we can rely ; suffer me to confide it to one other, even the good Ursula, in whose hands,

hands, if need required, I would trust your life, which Heaven knows is far dearer to me than my own. We will exchange the children, the royal orphan shall be taught to believe himself our son, and the heiress of Mendoza, under the care of Ursula, shall be brought up in the comfortable retreat she enjoys from your bounty. We shall have many opportunities of lavishing upon our own infant all the fond effusions of parental love, under the guise of friendship; till a future period we can protect and educate her as the granddaughter of Ursula; and doubtless that Providence which delights in benevolence and self-denial, will reward us in his good time, by making our child virtuous and happy.

At first Ramirez balanced between the father and the patriot; but the example and persuasions of Almeria influenced and determined him, he agreed that she should manage all; his heart dilating with the
joyous

joyous hope, that he should one day behold the offspring, fostered by him, ascend the throne of his fathers. Oh, benevolence ! thou sentiment born of Heaven, which can exalt human nature even to thy native skies, may thy powerful influence be ever successful in the moment of distress, to save helpless innocence from those evils which threaten its unprotected state ! May the hearts chosen by thee have opportunities to exert the noblest prerogative they can possess, their reward is their own feelings ; feelings not to be purchased by the wealth of diadems.

The royal babe was concealed with the utmost care by the women with whom he was intrusted, and the noble Ramirez and generous Almeria, after baptizing their own daughter by the name of Leonora, and bestowing on it many caresses and adieus, confided her to Ursula, who instantly conveyed it to her own house in the forest, near the family residence of the
Mendozas,

Mendozas, whilst the royal orphan was adopted by the count, and placed by the side of Almeria, who reared him with a tenderness little short of maternal.

The years of childhood contain little in them either various or amusing, those of Carlos were passed in the usual manner. The count returned, very shortly after the usurpation of Sancho, to his castle of Mendoza, where he employed all his time in the instruction of his adopted son. He had him taught every science, and stored his mind with all useful knowledge, and every noble sentiment. The genius of Carlos so repaid all his endeavours with success; and Ramirez pleased himself with the idea that he would not be unworthy one day of reigning.

Leonora was not forgotten, the countess placed her in a famous monastery, where she was educated with the greatest care, and taught many accomplishments,
which

which she could never have attained in the cottage of Ursula, but which the countess well knew would one day be necessary to her. Her education finished, she was often at the castle to visit her godmother, as she was taught to call the countess, and was looked upon by Carlos as an engaging child, dependent on his mother's bounty, and consequently much beneath his notice.

Pride was the only failing of Carlos, which his father carefully checked in every other instance but this, always affecting to lower Leonora in his eyes, dreading nothing so much as an attachment, which the son of Alphonso might treat with contempt when acquainted with his high pretensions.

His indifference towards Leonora therefore pleased his parents, and he left them at the age of eighteen to make his first essay in arms, under the banners of his uncle Gonfavez de Carma. This warlike statesman,

man, though many years older than Carlos, was so complete an adept in the arts of insinuation, and studied so well to procure him every pleasure and gratification, that he possessed entirely the confidence and friendship of the unsuspecting Carlos, who for a while abandoned himself entirely to his guidance; but an occurrence which soon happened altered the opinion of Carlos; and such was his rectitude and high notions of honor, that instead of esteem, he held Gonsalvez in the greatest abhorrence. The count we have seen had gained the friendship of Carlos; but his aunt, the amiable Felicia, excited in him sentiments of the purest veneration, and most exalted esteem: how then could he break the injustice of Gonsalvez towards her, to which he was shortly an indignant witness?

Gonsalvez was become enamoured of a lady of great quality and independent fortune, who but too readily returned his

licitious passion, and had actually so far forgot the dignity, and even appearance of virtue, as to follow him to the camp, disguised as one of his pages.

Carlos had received some intimation of this intrigue, but had conceived too high an opinion of his uncle, to give implicit credit to any thing tending to debase his character ; but an accidental certainty soon forced him to acknowledge his information true, and at the same time raised various conjectures in his bosom.

Gonsalvez, in a long and obstinate conflict with the Moors, received a wound, which forced him to be carried from the field to his tent; the troops were much disordered by the loss of their commander, but the youthful Carlos, taking upon him the command, carried destruction throughout the Moorish ranks, and crowned with victory, covered with dust and the blood of his enemies, Carlos for
the

the first time presented himself before his uncle, clad in complete armour.

Gonsalvez was evidently started, he uttered an exclamation of surprise and terror, repulsing the hand tendered him by Carlos.

But recalling his scattered thoughts, it is thee, brave Carlos, said he, at the moment my head disordered by my wounds, represented to my view, our late king Alphonso, such was he when together we have charged the Moors, all the ancient warriors that surrounded the couch of Alphonso, confirmed the resemblance; one old man was affected even to tears: thus, cried he, the eyes of Alphonso sparkled with majesty when he overthrew the prince of Fez, and snatched from his brow the royal crescent, thus he visited me, whose bleeding wounds bore witness of my share in that memorable day; Carlos listened with attention, but not

even the romance of youth, could lead him to fix upon one conjecture, bordering on probability; a soft melancholy overspread his soul, and unknowing the part he bore in the remembrance of Alphonso, he heaved a deep sigh to his memory, which Ramirez had early taught him to love and venerate.

The chiefs who had crouded to the tent were withdrawn; Carlos remained by his uncle's couch, wrapt in profound contemplation, the favorite page was not far off, gazing on the wounded Gonsalvez with infinite concern.

The silence was interrupted by a noise without, and the entrance of a domestic, to inform the count that Felicia was arrived.

That excellent woman having heard that a battle was inevitable, and knowing the military ardour of her husband, hastened

tened with all possible expedition, to attend him in case of need.

Her unexpected arrival confused Gonfálvez, but much more the unfortunate guilty Rosalie, who, lifting her eyes to heaven, sunk upon the ground without uttering a word, during the hurry occasioned by this unexpected accident. Gonfálvez in a few words explained the scene before them, to Carlos, and begged he would meet his aunt, say he was asleep, or form any pretence to prevent her entrance.

Carlos readily undertook to save his aunt the chagrin the scene he had witnessed must have inflicted on her, he received and led her to his own tent; the penetrating Felicia soon saw his embarrassment. Carlos had not the courtier's art of hiding, or rather divesting himself of feeling, his always painted itself on his expressive countenance.

The tenderness and sensibility of Felicia took the alarm, Carlos with difficulty quieted her apprehensions for Gonsalvez, and ascribed his own dejection to the fatigues of the day.

After waiting near two hours, Gonsalvez sent word that he was awake, and impatient to see his lady. Carlos accompanied her, his eyes fixed on the ground, and dreading the reception her solicitude would he imagined receive; but he was yet to learn, to what perfection his uncle could dissemble.

When she entered, Gonsalvez would raise himself, he stretched out his arms towards her, tenderly embraced her, and expressed the most unbounded transports at her goodness.

The deceived countess felt a secret joy animate her whole frame, and she forgot at that moment all the uneasy hours
he

he had caused her to suffer. Carlos withdrew to a small distance, amazed and confounded, with his arms folded, pondering upon the change in his uncle's manners.

Felicia remained two days with the artful Gonsalvez, who, after expressing the utmost gratitude for her tender cares, and representing the camp as a place totally unfit for her, requested her to return to a situation more safe and convenient.

After much sollicitation, she complied, and left Gonsalvez once more at liberty to pursue his shameful amour.

Carlos buried the remembrance of all this deep in his bosom, and from that hour his esteem and veneration encreased for Felicia, in proportion as his confidence in his uncle declined.

The campaign finished gloriously for Carlos, who at the conclusion of it, was
B 4 presented

presented by his uncle to Sancho ; his father met him at Leon, and was pleased to find his notions of honour, virtue and integrity, had all acquired fresh strength, by a further knowledge of the world ; his yet remaining fault was pride, yet not that pride which rejects the humble, and despises the poor ; no, he loved and cherished them, his pride was shewn only to those proud grandees who looked down upon the young Carlos as an object beneath their dignity, to these he was arrogance itself, and in despite of every endeavour of Ramirez, the prince would blaze forth superior to disguise.

An event soon happened replete with danger to Carlos, but which his daring spirit neither feared nor avoided ; a young grandee, whose high opinion of his own abilities had long excited indignation and contempt in the breast of Carlos, one day in the presence of the king, endeavoured to turn into ridicule an argument sustained

tained by Carlos, with a degree of elegant elocution, far superior to his own. The pride of Carlos took the alarm ; his opponent held a language he could not break, and the king himself was applied to, in order to reconcile the two enraged heroes.

He refused to become the arbitrator, dreading the power of Pedro and the fame of Carlos, but commended them to drop the subject and embrace each other ; Pedro willing to obey the king, advanced with open arms towards Carlos, but he, with an air at which Sancho was seen to shudder, repulsed his offered reconciliation, exclaiming, no ; not even at the command of a king, will I embrace a man against whom my breast heaves with resentment. Sancho gazed whilst he spoke in the attitude of a man, whose tortured conscience presents before him some horrid object to disturb the deadly midnight calm, he interfered, he spoke, he commanded no more, but hastily rising

and calling for Gonsalvez, quitted the hall of audience in visible disorder, he cast a look on Don Carlos, by all interpreted into a frown of displeasure, but it was rather a regard of horror.

It past unheeded by that daring spirit, who followed his father to their own residence, without the least concern or change of countenance.

When Sancho had entered his closet, he dismissed all his attendants, but Gonsalvez, and then spoke thus.

I cannot account for a singular sensation which I have just now felt, on beholding your nephew, how strongly has he brought back to my ideas the late king, when the pride of his heart, but now swelled before me, and his eyes gave language to his feelings ; I could have imagined it Alphonso's self. I am sorry on your account Gonsalvez, but I cannot endure

endure this family resemblance ; tortures would be mild compared with my sensations.

The count could not but acknowledge the likeness which had in like manner affected him, and proposed to remove Carlos from court, by some distant service.

Ramirez was their next subject ; the king had never concealed from Gonsalvez, that he both hated and feared him, the latter had long seen with envy the happiness of his family, and fiend like only sought an opportunity of destroying it. He added fresh grounds to the king's suspicions, and suggested that the arrogance of Carlos (and his resemblance to Alphonso, on which he doubtless prided himself, as well as bearing the name of the deceased prince) might probably give birth to some conspiracy in favor of himself or his mother, the only surviving

branch of the royal house of Alphonso. The wicked are generally susceptible of the most terrific impressions: this was the case with Sancho, his voice faltered, his whole frame was convulsed, he clasped the hand of Gonsalvez, and exclaimed, ah! forsake me not, here take my signet, rule uncontrouled over Leon, let all the privileges of royalty console thee for the loss of thy family, for then he must swear to exterminate for me the whole of the Mendoza's. I dread and detest them worse than death; possess of the sole purpose for which he had thus irritated the king against Ramirez, by working on his fears, his next care was to gratify speedily his own envy, and black infernal malice.

He bowed in silence, and pretending to display unfeigned sorrow, retired from the presence, ruminating on the means of destroying not only Ramirez, but the whole of his devoted family.

It

It was not easy to be accomplished against public attacks. Ramirez was invulnerable, his character was too good, his conduct too generally known, and universally revered, to be sullied by the breath of slander.

The man whose pernicious aid had contributed to the murder of his king, could not, it may well be supposed, experience much remorse at a deed which appeared to him far less atrocious, than many he had been accessory to.

Poison he looked upon to be the most efficacious, and retained in his pay the confidential servant of Ramirez, to whom he gave proper instructions to administer the infernal beverage, when opportunity should offer. It is now time to review the noble family in that happy state, the tranquility of which was destined to be so soon disturbed.

The

The experience of Ramirez rendered his observations generally just, and he soon saw that the king was seriously displeased with Carlos, for his behaviour to Pedro ; and though he saw with pleasure, the noble spirit of his adopted son, yet he lamented the little command he had over his temper upon certain occasions ; he concluded therefore that the best way was to quit the court for a short time, and taking Carlos with him, under pretence of paying his respects to his mother (and a lady selected by them and approved by Sancho, as his future bride) they both took the road leading to the castle of Mendoza.

This castle was one of the noblest remains of Moorish grandeur ; it was ancient and of vast extent, it was surrounded by the most beautiful gardens, and the adjoining mountains were covered with trees, which formed an amphitheatre, rising to the skies ; a rapid river ran on one side
of

of the garden, the banks of which were covered with perpetual verdure, interspersed with the various riches of the revolving seasons. The haunts of the feathered songsters being never disturbed, they filled with their notes the wide expanse, delighted in these enchanted gardens, and repaid the protection afforded them with their choicest songs.

The castle was built with the utmost propriety of architecture, and the furniture denoted the wealth and exquisite taste of the proprietors. Mendoza, the great grandfather of Ramirez, had obtained it as a recompence for his good services from Pedro the First, and as it had formerly served for a favorite residence to the kings of Saragossa, it may well be imagined that nothing was neglected which could in any degree contribute to its beauty or convenience. The heroic Almeria had during the absence of her husband employed much of her time in inspecting the progress of
Leonora,

Leonora, who at the early age of eighteen was blessed with genius, beauty, and all the accomplishments her fond mother could desire.

I have said she was handsome, but she was not remarkably so, her principal beauty was her form, and which was certainly never excelled; but she was also good, mild, and amiable. How often did the countess regret her situation, and wish to snatch her from the obscurity of her present situation, to fold her to her bosom, to exclaim, 'Thou art my daughter, the child of Mendoza! occupy the rank thy virtues merit.'

But she remembered her friends, she remembered the sacred vow she had so solemnly attested before all-righteous Heaven, and to that omnipotent power she committed her daughter's welfare; and to strengthen her fortitude she secretly renewed

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newed her vow, and determined on no account ever to forfeit it.

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Leonora's situation was not very pleasant; educated with care, and possessed of ideas far beyond those of the village maids, with whom she associated, she was become the envy of them all.

Whilst on the contrary, every young man admired her, and there was not one but would have sacrificed his life for the mild, the engaging Leonora. Already two or three had demanded her in marriage. Her grandmother always replied, she was too young, and Leonora pleaded indifference.

Jerome was the most wealthy, and most assiduous of all Leonora's rustic lovers; he was less ignorant than the generality of the villagers, and though rejected like the rest, he did not despair.

When

When Leonora went to the castle, he was always at hand ; if she carried to the countess a small basket of fruits or flowers, Jerome flew swifter than lightning to bear it for her. In short, he was ever near her, except when the countess kept her for two or three days together at the castle, Jerome was then overpowered with melancholy ; his harvest or his other occupations were neglected, and wandering round its walls with folded arms, he could only cast a look of anxious expectation towards the castle gates ; but when he beheld the lovely Leonora descend from them, his heart bounded with delight.

The day Ramirez and Carlos were expected, Leonora was at the castle ; the prudent Almeria feared her powerful attractions might have too great an influence upon the tender mind of Carlos, and resolved to deprive herself during his stay of the loved society of Leonora ; she therefore told her, that the variety of company

pany they expected would prevent the possibility of their seeing each other for some time at the castle, but that she would sometimes visit her at the cottage of Ursula.

Leonora wept, she did not know why ; the idea of Carlos scarce remained, nor could that trifling remainder be productive of any emotion, as he had ever treated her with an indifference bordering on contempt. How then was the reluctance with which Leonora received this intimation to be accounted for ?

It was thee, O Nature ! thee, power supreme, which stamped the first impression on the infant mind ; by thee inspired, the feathered tribe nourish and protect their young. The animals, the reptiles, all obey thy powerful voice : and last, though not the least, the human form divine ; it was thee, O Nature, that whispered to the lovely Leonora, in the still small voice of
regret.

regret. It was with difficulty she restrained her emotions, which she attributed to the parting with Aurelia, whose hand she affectionately pressed, and begged she would remind the countess of her promised visit to the cottage. She would have bent her knee before her benefactress, but she snatched her to her bosom, uttered a groan of anguish, and turned away.

Leonora with a heavy heart returned to her cottage. It is now necessary to say something of Aurelia, who was arrived not long before at the castle of Mendoza. She was the destined bride of Carlos. Her father was one of the first grandees in Spain, both in respect to family and power. Ramirez knew that his alliance would at a future time strengthen the claims of Carlos, and he was well assured from the general tenor of Aguilon's conduct, that he would cheerfully support them, and nobly thank the man who had raised his daughter to a throne.

Aurelia

Aurelia was beautiful, her fine black eyes were contrasted by the extreme whiteness of her skin; and her features were as regular as the hand of nature ever formed. She was superior in charms to Leonora; but in the perfections of the mind fell far short of her. Capricious, and accustomed from her earliest infancy to unlimited controul, she looked upon adulation as her due.

She had never seen Carlos; but being ordered by her father to receive him as her future husband, she concluded he was already, by report or some secret means, a perfect slave to her charms; and she was hourly employed in some new decoration in order to confirm her conquest.

Their age rather than their similitude of ideas attached her for the moment to Leonora, and she often spoke to her of Carlos, recounted the noble actions ascribed to him, related the great events of that day in which he brought off the army
victorious

victorious over the Moors. She made Leonora describe his person, his manners, and the most trifling occurrences of their infant years. All she heard of Carlos was distinct from Leonora, who was almost the last person capable of satisfying her eager curiosity; she could describe his person, but having been carefully kept from him, she knew but little of his disposition.

Aurelia secretly rejoiced at her answers, as she had long dreaded that so engaging a creature as Leonora could not have been beheld with indifference; and finding herself freed from the apprehension of so formidable a rival, she had so high an opinion of her own charms, as to imagine it impossible, if once beheld, it could ever be with indifference.

She had been addressed by many accomplished and gallant cavaliers; their attentions had flattered her vanity, but her heart had never been interested, a sensation

fation hitherto unknown, and which she was unconscious of, made her wish to appear charming in the eyes of Don Carlos.

The removal of Leonora gave her pleasure; though in her eyes an obscure villager, she could not be blind to her numberless graces.

When married to Don Carlos, said she to Almeria, I will instantly send for Leonora, she shall remain with me; perhaps, added she, turning to a glass, she may be permitted to assist in the decoration of my person. The countess heaved a sigh, scarcely repressed a glance of indignation, and inwardly exclaimed, to what have I subjected thee, my Leonora, but thank Heaven, thou hast a more expanded soul, and sentiments which will pierce through the veil of obscurity, and counteract the evils of adversity.

Occupied

Occupied with very different thoughts were the two ladies when the arrival of their expected guests was announced.

The count entered alone, Almeria flew into his arms, and transported at beholding him, forgot for a moment the absence of Don Carlos. Aurelia was disappointed, and secretly accused his tardy neglect.

Ramirez however soon restored the smiles which had so suddenly vanished, by apologizing to her in the tenderest manner, for the absence of his son, who had been under the necessity of accompanying his uncle, to the castle of an old Lord not far off, with whom Gonsalvez had particular business. A few hours brought them to the castle of Mendoza; Gonsalvez paid his compliments to the ladies in the true style of a courtier: Carlos with a diffidence, neither his mother nor his mistress thought necessary, the latter grew highly provoked, Carlos was not profuse
in

in his compliments, nor did he seem in the least struck with her beauty, but rallied Gonsalvez with infinite ease, upon an adventure he had met with; the ladies becoming curious, Gonsalvez thus related it.

As I was riding through the wood, a considerable way before my nephew, I saw a young rustic talking very earnestly to a girl of astonishing elegance, her eyes were bent on the ground, and she seemed pursuing her way, without replying or even listening to him.

I imagined them to be two lovers, and resolving to amuse myself and do a good action, by endeavouring to reconcile them, I alighted, and quitting my domestics, and advancing towards them, addressed the fair maiden in a style I thought best adapted to her station. But imagine my surprise, I beheld a form which would have graced a throne, and I

was answered with a sense, dignity and politeness, which filled me with amazement; I instantly changed my address, and learnt that she lived at no very great distance.

The looks, words and emotions of the rustic by her side, left me no doubt of his attachment; but I was willing to try the strength of hers, and offered my interest to remove any obstacle that might impede their union.

A blush of resentment overspread her cheek, and she firmly pronounced, I shall never marry, my lord. I requested some reason for this resolution, rather singular for a girl of her age and rank. My reason, replied she, will be thought a foolish one, and will be no doubt attributed to improper pride; but that to me is of little consequence, my sentiments will not allow me to accept of a rustic, whose ideas are as confined and as illiberal as those of Jerome's,

Jerome's, who has been upbraiding me with some services I have unhappily received from him; from my station I cannot expect a higher offer, and therefore I will live single, and cherish the last years of my beloved parent.

Jerome was now at a little distance, and, profiting by the pride I saw kindled in her bosom. I offered to take her to Leon, and procure her the enjoyment of every splendour.

Virtue instantly conquered her pride, and darting at me a glance of inexpressible contempt, ran into the woods and disappeared from my pursuit: my nephew at that moment came up, and was surprised to find me somewhat confused at what had passed. I must indeed own, I have scarce yet got the better of my surprise.

By

By your descriptions, said Aurelia, your wood nymph must certainly be Leonora ; indeed I believe no one of her rank possesses such romantic refined notions as herself.

The countess frowned involuntarily, Ramirez was not at his ease ; but Carlos gayly replied, he hoped Leonora would not fall in his way, as a fight of her must be dangerous to him, since his uncle could talk of nothing else.

For once indeed the heart and tongue of Gonsalvez were in union, he was captivated by the graces and elegance of Leonora, her silent contempt of his base offers (for he said much more than he chose to acknowledge) had raised a flame in his bosom, not easily to be extinguished, and he determined, if possible, to gain her into his possession. Business would not admit of his stay from Saragossa, he therefore left the castle of Mendoza the next morning,

morning, but charged a servant, well versed in the arts of intrigue, to find out the abode of Leonora, and devise some means to carry her off. Satisfaction in the mean time; reigned neither in the castle of the great Mendoza, nor in the humble abode of Ursula.

Jerome had offended Leonora, he had in vain pleaded his passion, he was firmly rejected, and in the moment of despair, had accused her of ingratitude; and tried to interest in his behalf the noble lord, who had so graciously accosted them; this was decisive, and Jerome admitted no more at the cottage.

To the castle disorder seemed advancing with rapid steps.

Ramirez and Almeria were dissatisfied with Carlos, they saw with grief that so far from loving Aurelia, he regarded her with an indifference, bordering upon con-

tempt. Looking upon his conduct as the effects of pride, they regretted ever having encouraged those noble flights of imagination, which had tended to increase and confirm it.

Aurelia was mortified in the highest degree, and for the first time in her life, found her beauty, with all its natural and borrowed graces, totally neglected, not one compliment passed the lips of Carlos; he was attentive it must be owned, but it was an attention of the same nature which he paid to every one; in short, he was the only person in the castle whose heart might be said to be truly at ease; he had brought with him from court a young nobleman of distinguished rank, to whom he was much attached. Alvarez had many good qualities, and esteemed Don Carlos very sincerely, but Alvarez could not behold unmoved, like him, the beautiful Aurelia, but as he was not the conquest she aimed at, his assiduities were overlooked, and Alvarez had

had no other consolation than pouring his griefs into the bosom of his friend, who not only heard with complacency, but bound himself, without hesitation, never to marry the object which he adored.

Alvarez felt a gleam of hope, and redoubled all his cares to please Aurelia.

This was the situation of things at the castle, when the sudden death of Ramirez threw them all into confusion; he was seized suddenly after dinner, and expired before any assistance could be afforded him.

Evident marks of poison appeared upon his body, and the almost immediate flight of his confidential servant, gave ground for suspicion; diligent search was made after him, but in vain; and the inconsolable Almeria mourned in secret, the premature end of a husband, she had ever loved with the tenderest affection.

The secret of Carlos's birth now rested with her; but convinced of the instability of human life, she sent for her confessor, a man celebrated for his piety and worth. He heard the relation with astonishment mingled with joy, he listened with transport to the heart soothing tale, a survivor remained to his king; a son of that Alphonso so worthy of reigning; the holy man was all attention, the unheeded tear strayed down his reverend cheek.

He lifted his hands, his very soul to heaven, he implored an ardent benediction upon those which had saved their prince.

With enthusiastic ardour he looked forward to other days, he consoled Almeria, he represented Carlos ascending the throne of his ancestors, of seeing him tread under foot tyranny and usurpation, of hearing the voices of glad thousands hailing
ing

ing him their king, and blending his name with that of Mendoza, in glad shouts of joy.

Alas, good man, he fancied this already as accomplished; accustomed to theory only, he little imagined how difficult the task must be to impress an idea of justice upon the minds of a deluded and enthusiastic people, - and destroy the fabric erected by crafty treachery, and maintained by policy; mistaken in their first general notions of reform or change, they no longer see matters but in a false point of view, and are easily led into the appointed snare. Almeria was encouraged by him to persevere in keeping the important secret; he deposited in a place he shewed to her, known only to themselves, the dagger, the ring, a suit of armour, and a written testimony of the birth of Carlos, who not suspecting his high descent, thought no title more noble than that of Mendoza; his active spirit longed

again for war, he wished the Moors might break the peace, and call him again to acquire glory and enrich his country.

These wishes were confined to his own bosom and that of Alvarez ; his outward appearance was that of content assumed to console and gratify his mother. Aurelia had left the castle upon the death of Ramirez, shocked and chagrined at the coolness of Carlos, but Almeria knowing the consequence that alliance would give them, eagerly solicited her return.

She came melancholy, had abated her usual haughtiness, but she could not behold Carlos with indifference ; and her pensive air added new charms to her beauty.

Carlos upbraided by his mother, for the little attention he paid to Aurelia, redoubled his respect ; but without forgetting the promise he had given Alvarez,
but

but an event was impending which deranged all the plans formed by Almeria, and convinced her that we cannot resist the all wise dispensations of supreme power.

Leonora, during all the length of time elapsed since the return of Carlos, had never been at the castle, but spent her life in a melancholy sameness; deprived of the instructive and charming conversation of Almeria, she felt a vacancy in her days, she could not fill up; the cares of Ursula demanded her gratitude, but they were no longer interesting; day after day, persecuted by her rustic admirers, she was at last provoked to write to her benefactress, and beg her to persuade Ursula, to let her take the veil in the monastery where she had been educated.

The next day brought Almeria to the cottage; this unexpected request of Leonora, had thrown her into great perplex-

ities, she had passed a sleepless night, ruminating upon it, allowing the present impropriety of her situation, yet she could not think of giving up her daughter for ever; she consulted with Ursula, and at last agreed that Leonora should go to the monastery; but she told her she had many and powerful reasons, why she could not at present permit her to take the veil.

A distant hope appeared comfort to Leonora, without diving into Almeria's reasons, who tenderly embraced her at parting, and assured her, that in a few days, she would send a trusty servant to conduct her to the retreat she had chosen. At her return she found Carlos and his friend both absent, at a great hunting match in the forest, and as she made no secret of Leonora's choice, it was soon known in the house, consequently the trusty spy of Gonsalvez found he had no time to lose in order to gratify his vile employer, and therefore hiring four braves, just at dusk
he

he conducted them to the cottage of Ursula. He knocked at the door, which being opened by the good old woman, they rushed in.

Leonora little imagined their design, but concluding them banditti in search of plunder, silently awaited the death they generally bestowed; but when she saw them bind her dear, her good Ursula, she forgot her own danger, and flew amongst them, clasped her grandmother in her arms, and shrieked so dreadfully, that she alarmed Jerome, who was not far off. He ran to the cottage; the door was fastened, but he heard men's voices, and the cries of Leonora redoubled. He had only a stick in his hand, but love gave new force to his courage. He burst open the door, and attacked them without fear; but though fiercer than a young lion deprived of his prey, his courage could avail him nothing, unarmed against so many.

He

He was overpowered, and fell at the feet of Leonora, whose robe he clasped in falling, and held it so fast, that it was impossible to unloose it from his grasp. At the sight of Jerome, to all appearance dead, the faint gleam of hope which played round Leonora dispersed, and upon their endeavours to force her from Ursula, who endeavoured to retain her in her feeble arms, she redoubled her cries.

The unfeeling bravoës were used to the work of death, and deaf to the tears of innocence, or the supplications of age; the resistance of Ursula enraged the barbarians, and they stabbed her in the arms of Leonora.

But Heaven had not abandoned the injured Leonora. Carlos and Alvarez were returning to the castle, by a track at no great distance from the cottage. The cries of distress could not be heard unnoticed by the generous Carlos; he did
not

not stay to hear them repeated, but turning his horse, followed the sound, and soon outstripped Alvarez, although he used his utmost diligence to follow him.

He arrived just as Leonora, overwhelmed with grief and horror, had sunk insensible by the side of Jeromè. The ruffians were preparing to take the advantage of her situation, and convey her off. When Carlos and his friend entered, a fierce dispute ensued. They were all well armed ; but the impetuous courage of Carlos, which had once awed a victorious army, soon finished the contest, by striking their leader dead ; the others fled different ways into the thickest of the wood. The attendants being come up, assisted Alvarez to raise Ursula and Jerome from the ground.

The sole attention of Carlos was confined to Leonora ; he raised her in his arms, he contemplated her features with
sen-

sensations hitherto unknown to him ; her features, though agitated by fear, and clouded by temporary death, yet retained all their native sensibility. Carlos recollected her, and wondered he had never before thought her half so handsome.

By degrees she opened her eyes, fixed them on her preserver, and with a faint blush exclaimed, Don Carlos! Enraptured at the sound of her voice, the susceptible Carlos pressed her to his bosom. She blushed, and endeavoured to withdraw from his arms, but he still retained her.

Envy me not, lovely Leonora, said he, the transport of this delightful moment ; I have fortunately saved thy life and honor, promise me hereafter the happiness of protecting thee ; never more shall Leonora be liable to such an insult, whilst Mendoza exists, or has a castle to shelter her.

Leonora

Leonora was unprepared for this sudden effusion of a passion so suddenly inspired. Her cheeks were suffused by a deeper blush, and without replying, she cast her eyes upon Ursula, who with a feeble voice called her to approach. Carlos led her to the dying matron. I am dying, Leonora, said she, but I die satisfied in beholding thee in safety, and still more in knowing that you owe your preservation to Don Carlos. Ah, my lord, continued she, addressing him, still continue to protect and esteem her, she merits it of you.

Carlos raised the hand of the weeping Leonora to his lips, and assured Ursula, that it was his intention to convey his precious charge to the care of his mother; and swore that no consideration should ever induce him to abandon the interest of Leonora.

I am content, replied Ursula, in a broken and faint voice; I am at peace—
weep

weep not, my beloved child, remember me with affection, 'tis all I can ask of you, for thou art of higher blood than mine; at this awful moment I can no longer deceive thee—Margaret was not thy mother, thou art ———. Her voice failed, and death with inexorable haste, snatched her from the world, and left Carlos and Leonora in the greatest astonishment. Carlos in the tenderest manner soothed the grief of his charge, and begged permission to conduct her to his mother.

Leonora hesitated, she feared to appear unbidden at the castle; but what could she do; to remain in the cottage was impossible, her enemies might return, and it was besides a scene of blood and terror; these just reasons, joined to the persuasions of Carlos, induced her to venture, he left some of his attendants to guard the bodies, others carried Jerome, who still breathed, to the castle, whilst Carlos and his friend followed on foot with Leonora: it was late

late before they reached the castle ; Almeria and Aurelia were still up awaiting their return, and fearing some accident, had counted with impatience many tedious hours ; but though relieved from their apprehensions by their arrival, they could not help exclaiming in the utmost surprise at beholding Leonora.

Carlos in a few words told his mother the occasion, nor did he forget the last words of Ursula, willing to give additional consequence to Leonora, and believing high birth would entitle her to the protection of his mother ; indeed, so occupied was he in contemplating Leonora, and recommending her to every one's notice, that he quite overlooked the visible emotion of his mother ; she wanted no other rights, but those she already possessed, to assure her of her friendship, and had she owed her preservation to any other hand but that of Carlos, Almeria would probably have received her with open arms,
happy

happy of any pretence to embrace her daughter; but this unlucky turn, and the energy, not to add love, she saw sparkle in the eyes of Carlos, threw her into a cruel embarrassment, notwithstanding which she welcomed Leonora with friendship.

Aurelia was now completely miserable; she had long endeavoured to flatter herself, that the indifference of Carlos was general; one glance of his eyes towards Leonora, convinced her to the contrary; Leonora was no sooner alone, than she began seriously to reflect upon the last words of Ursula; in vain did she endeavour to penetrate the mysterious veil, which concealed their meaning. She had always felt sentiments far above her station, which in vain she had essayed to check, for upon every occasion the difference was discernible.

After much deliberation, Leonora resolved to prosecute her first intention,
and

and with the permission of the countess, enter without delay the calm retreat she had chosen.

This finally settled, Leonora endeavoured to compose herself to rest, but the distress she had so recently experienced, and the dreadful images which affrighted fancy continually revived before her, prevented her from closing her eyes, and the dawn was never hailed with a more cheerful welcome than by the woeworn Leonora, who, pale and unrefreshed, dressed herself, and descended from her apartment into the garden, where she was surprised at the sight of Carlos, who was already there, and approached her with the utmost respect, his language was animated, tender and persuasive, but it was the language of love, which Leonora had often before heard, but never from A CARLOS; she had always replied without embarrassment to the solicitations of her rustic lovers, she had felt offended
and

and disgusted at their presumption; but the manners of Don Carlos were so different, and his eloquence so much more expressive, that Leonora, in the moment she most wished to avoid him, felt herself stopped by an invincible and powerful influence, she hesitated—she faltered—her unwilling tongue pronounced, desist my lord, I cannot accept your love; whilst the rising blush and expressive sweetness of her voice, encouraged the enraptured Carlos to proceed; again he repeated how much he adored her, and that, till the moment in which he beheld her in distress, he never had known love; and probably would have gained some declaration, from whence he might have extracted some hope, if the countess had not at that moment joined them.

For the first time in his life, Carlos felt confused before her; he knew her lofty ideas, and the pride of royal birth, which upon some occasion animated every feature

ture and influenced every action, she advanced with a sterner countenance than she ever before had assumed, and with a voice suitable to her looks, said, retire Don Carlos, and forget not what my intentions are for your welfare and happiness.

He bowed and retired, his haughty courage failed, he knew her implacable disposition, he already anticipated all the pangs of hopeless love, honor, and the dying words; the solemn charge of Ursula forbade all attempts, which the virtue of Leonora would even then have frustrated, if he had been inclined to forget the protection he had vowed to grant her, but the soul of Carlos was above even the thought, and he retired in silence to seek Alvarez, and vent his griefs in the faithful bosom of that sincere friend.

The countess, left alone with Leonora, abated the severity of aspect she had assumed before her son, and questioned her

er in the most delicate and tender manner, what were her sentiments of Don Carlos. Those of the most heartfelt gratitude, madam, replied Leonora, modestly casting down her eyes; I fear, replied the countess, my dear child, that you both deceive me and yourself. I know well the youthful heart, even now I can easily perceive that, unknown to yourself, you love; nay start not, it is necessary that I should be thus abrupt; the person, the graces, and the service Don Carlos was so happy as to afford you last night, I can easily perceive, have left an indelible impression upon your susceptible and grateful heart; but I conjure you for my sake, your own, but above all for that of Don Carlos, stifle this fatal passion in its earliest birth, the virtues of Leonora would give additional lustre to the name of Menloza; but a fatal mystery forbids my calling Leonora by the tender name of daughter.

The

The countess ended ; a profound sigh issued from her breast, and a tear fell on the hand of Leonora, which she held in hers.

Leonora felt the tear, and impelled by a secret impulse, fell on her knees before the countess, and clasping both her hands, pressed them to her heart. What a trying moment to a fond and affectionate mother ! whose maternal love struggled so forcibly with her duty, that the conflict became almost too powerful for nature to sustain. She raised Leonora in her arms, the secret hovered on her lips, when the shades of her regretted friends seemed to rise before her ; they seemed imploring her not to forsake their son. Her rigid sense of honor, and her virtue, strengthened her noble resolution, and breaking from the tender embrace in which Leonora still held her, Go, said she, too enchanting Leonora, I must send you from my sight, or, like Don Carlos, I shall be se-

duced from my engagements by the force of your attractions ; for he cannot love you, without forfeiting an alliance fraught with every advantage, which his late father contracted in his name. Adieu, beloved girl, if he again addresses you, remember the dictates of your virtue, and his honor. Pronouncing these words with a determined voice, she quitted Leonora, who remained some time immoveable with surprize.

She endeavoured to persuade herself she only felt esteem and gratitude for Don Carlos. The last words of Ursula recurred to her mind. Yes, my revered, my only friend, cried she, with energy, thou who perhaps knewest the mystery with which I am enveloped, I will reward thy protecting cares, I will banish Carlos from my remembrance ; he is the destined husband of Aurelia, and in espousing her, may still continue the friend of Leonora, banished from his presence she may yet live

live in his esteem. Ah, how worthy he is of being esteemed, of being beloved ! The last words, accompanied with a deep sigh, escaped involuntarily, and Leonora returned to the house with a heavy heart ; she went to Aurelia's apartments ; the vivacity of that lady had entirely forsaken her. A mutual coolness subsisted, which each of them endeavoured to hide from the other.

Aurelia adverted to Leonora's danger on the preceding evening, and said, with a forced smile, how fortunate for you that Don Carlos was so near:

Yes, replied Leonora, and how doubly fortunate that he possessed such powerful sentiments of humanity, as induced him at once to pity and protect the unfortunate.

Aurelia fancied Leonora spoke with a pointed meaning, and arrogantly answered, that Don Carlos's natural courage and ge-

nerosity were the sole motives which actuated his conduct at the moment ; but perhaps, added she, with ineffable disdain, his beholding you in distress, dependance, and possessed of some few attractions, may have since induced him to encourage a transient passion, more fleeting than the very winds. Trust me, Leonora, I know the real sentiments of Carlos , no can you imagine that the lofty soul which refused to bow before its sovereign, will be long the slave of an ignoble passion, or disgrace itself by an inferior alliance.

The insulted Leonora burst into tears. Alas, cried she, I have no pretensions to the hand of Mendoza ; I have resigned them all to the entreaties of his mother ; but perhaps, added she, with some dignity, an alliance with me might not be so very disgraceful ; my birth, madam, is yet unknown, but my pride is not inferior to that of Don Carlos. His affection for me is doubtful, nor will I ever accept it till
publicly

publicly avowed by him, and sanctioned by his mother.

She would have proceeded, but Carlos was at her feet. He had heard her last words, he saw her tears, and beheld envy, rage, and jealousy, sparkling in the eyes of Aurelia.

Beloved Leonora, cried he, attend to what I mean to proclaim to the listening world, and you, madam, who have thus meanly insulted virtue in affliction, go to my mother, tell her that Leonora alone possesses, and shall possess, my undivided and eternal affection.

Aurelia, unable from passion to reply, darted at them such a look, in quitting the apartment, as made Leonora tremble.

Fear not, beloved of women, said Carlos, taking her hand, fear not the utmost excesses of her rage, have I not sworn to

protect thee? and by all that is sacred, I will.

Alas, cried Leonora, cease to overwhelm me with obligation I must not accept; leave me to return to the obscurity I have so long lived in; wean yourself in time, signor, from a passion which seems replete with every ill; fulfil the wishes of your family, by giving your hand to Donna Aurelia; she is not displeased without a cause.

She has no right, my charming Leonora, to controul a thought or action of mine; my father entered into a treaty with hers, provided we should love each other; from the first I beheld her with indifference, I plainly saw love had no share in her consent; she beheld only the advantages resulting from our union as displayed by her father, and perhaps a momentary wish of adding one more captive to her haughty charms. Viewing with indifference the whole

whole sex, I might perhaps in time have entered into my family's designs, but now honor, rectitude, and my own happiness, forbids my offering to another my hand, whilst Leonora alone possesses all my love. Leonora felt secretly rejoiced, but she called to mind the words of the countess; she intreated Don Carlos to forget her; she expatiated upon the beauty of Donna Aurelia, ascribed her jealousy to the fear of losing him, and set forth the right his mother had to his obedience.

Leonora, said Carlos, it is in vain; whether you favor me with a return to my ardent passion or not, I never can be the husband of Aurelia; Alvarez loves her, and I have sworn never to plant a dagger in the bosom of my friend. My mother treats my determination and his love as idle tales. I revere and respect her, but she will never find the resolution of her son, the descendant of Mendoza, is to be shaken

by arguments founded alone on mercenary motives.

Carlos was silent, and by looks alone, more eloquent than words, attempted to plead his cause to Leonora.

The discovery he had just made, shook her resolution; the words of the countess began to lose their wonted influence, but a rising spark of gratitude spread over her remembrance, and hastily rising, let me pass, my lord, said she, suffer me to fly your presence, it is but too dangerous, I will instantly seek the countess, and intreat her to send me without delay to the abode I have long since chosen. What abode? interrupted the impetuous Carlos. A *Monastery*, was all the reply, and she darted from him.

Donna Almeria was surprized at the disorder evident in Leonora's countenance. Ah! madam, cried she, lose no time I conjure

jure you, send me hence, if possible, this very day I distrust myself; I tremble lest an unguarded word should encourage Don Carlos. I dare not behold him, ah! how well you foresaw the fatal effects of my inexperience.

At this moment Carlos, frantic at the mention of a monastery, rushed into the apartment. Leonora looking up beheld him, she was on her knees before Donna Almeria, and at the sight of his countenance, on which was expressively painted rage, love and despair, she hid her face in his mother's robe.

Carlos precipitately snatched her from the ground, and gracefully bending one knee before the countess; pardon me, madam, my presumption in daring to love, unsanctioned by your wish, but it is a sentiment of too powerful a nature, to be controuled at will. I adore Leonora, whilst Aurelia demands not even my

esteem, the unworthy manner in which she dared to insult the innocence she ought to have protected, has made me for ever her enemy. I see you are displeased, and that Leonora is uneasy; banish me then, drive me for ever from your presence, exert your utmost rigour; but never think that time can efface sentiments I glory in acknowledging.

Ah Carlos, my dear son, cried the countess, what misery art thou preparing for thy wretched mother; respect my sorrows, nor seek to penetrate the motives by which I am compelled to act; be satisfied when for the first and last time I solemnly assure you, that my love for Leonora equals if not excels your own; that it would fulfil the fondest wish of my heart, to call her daughter, but it is forbid me by a tie the most sacred, by an invincible bar; rely then upon my tenderness for Leonora, and prepare to quit her for ever.

Not

Not whilst I breathe, cried the frantic Carlos; never whilst I have life will I suffer the protection you mean to afford her; rid your son of his wretched existence, and then Leonora may enter her darling monastery. My love shall never be the cause of her seclusion from the world. You say, madam, that you love her, retain her then with you, watch over her with maternal care; I will command my passion, if it offends Leonora; content in seeing her happy, in beholding her smiles, I will endeavour to struggle against an arbitrary and cruel fate.

On that consideration, replied the countess, fearing to irritate him farther, I consent to Leonora's staying. Will you agree, lovely Leonora, said Carlos, taking her hand, will you accept the friendship of Donna Almeria and that of Mendoza?

Yes, answered Leonora, collecting all her firmness, the former is most acceptable

to me, as will be the latter as long as Don Carlos behaves with that dignity of soul which ought to distinguish the descendants of that Mendoza, to whose efforts we owe the emancipation of Leonora from the yoke of the infidels.

Your country yet groans under the Moorish tyranny, even now the greatest part of Spain awaits a Christian champion; rise then, once great in arms, victorious Carlos, rise even above thy former self, shake off a passion which unnerves thy manly arm, assert the cause of Christendom!—And receive from Leonora the prize of victory, interrupted the animated hero; her dear idea will sustain me in the moment of danger, and the astonished Moors shall fly before the name of Leonora!

Be it so, said Almeria, willing to break off the conference; return to the castle of Mendoza a great and acknowledged conqueror;

queror ; Leonora shall bestow the wreath of victory prepared by the hands of maternal love ; your dutiful submission demands some little concession.

These matters were no sooner settled, than they were known to Aurelia, who shortly left the castle, highly enraged against Carlos (who never could be persuaded to marry her), and for mere vexation, she permitted Don Alvarez to wear her device, and attend her home.

Carlos beheld the shield of his friend with joy ; he congratulated him on his approaching happiness, but secretly feared he would never find it in obtaining Aurelia, whose departure was not regretted by the inhabitants of the castle.

Don Carlos in the society of his mother and sister enjoyed the most refined pleasure. Leonora trusting that time and absence would subdue his passion, gave way to the
natural

natural vivacity of her disposition, and displayed such new charms, as added new force to his love, by causing him to esteem her virtues as much if not more than he had admired her person. As he strictly avoided renewing the theme she had forbid, she treated him with the charming freedom of a brother, and without knowing, imbibed the delicious poison she flattered herself she was able to withstand.

Donna Almeria saw with pain their increasing danger; she knew Carlos could not brook opposition, and therefore, without explaining her reasons, wrote to Gonzálvez de Carma, acquainting him that her son, tired of an inactive life, burnt to signalize himself against the common enemy, and requested some appointment in the army.

De Carma, who had not yet thought of any feasible method of getting rid of this devoted family, gladly seized so promising
an

an occasion of sending Carlos upon a very dangerous service, and determined to bear the orders of Sancho in person to the castle of Mendoza. The variety of his occupations had hitherto prevented him from seeking his fair wood nymph, who was nevertheless far from being forgotten; he imagined his servant had failed in his attempt, but never dreamt in what manner.

He found Donna Almeria alone upon his arrival, and after the first compliments, enquired for her son, and was informed he was walking in the wood. Servants were sent to seek him, and Gonsalvez, leaning against the window, happened to cast his eyes carelessly over the plain before the castle, but what was his astonishment, he beheld Carlos advancing, but on his arm hung with familiar ease, the beautiful rustic, adorned with all the simple elegance of dress.

Gonsalvez

Gonsalvez started ! jealousy raised her keenest flame in his breast. The countenance of Carlos bespoke him happy ; and the smiles of Leonora evinced that he was not indifferent to her. Carlos led her into the saloon, paid his respects to his uncle, whilst his mother, presenting Leonora, told in a few words the history of her being at the castle.

Gonsalvez, with well acted hypocrisy, extolled his nephew's action to the skies, apologized for the error he had once been led into, and during his stay at the castle, behaved to Leonora with profound reserve, and a respect calculated to render his designs unsuspected. Eight days he was an inmate of the castle, and each glance from Leonora to Carlos was a fresh motive, which like a fiend hurried him on to the destruction of every obstacle which impeded his obtaining her.

At

At the expiration of that time he warned Don Carlos to be ready to depart with him. Carlos sought Leonora ; a deadly paleness overspread his face, he sat down by her in silence.

Don Carlos, said she, resting her hand upon his arm, why this downcast look ? that despondent sigh, so unlike your natural character ; and I must add, so unlike what you ought to be ?

Ah, Leonora, replied he, I can no longer disguise those feelings I have essayed to subdue, but I was then happy in beholding you ; I am now going to seek glory in the midst of danger, but why should I wish to acquire honors and fame, if I am only permitted the empty satisfaction of laying the pageant at the feet of Leonora ? Whilst she accepts the trophies, she will reject the lover : better let me hope to fall bravely beneath the scymetars of the Moors.

Leonora

Leonora raised her eyes, swimming in tears, and with great sweetness said, Why thus afflict yourself, and accuse me of what destiny alone should stand excused? I wish you to become respectable, great, and form the sole delight of a mother, worthy of all your tenderness. I am satisfied your friendship for Alvarez precludes all farther thoughts of Aurelia, but look around the circle of splendid beauty which adorns the Spanish court, choose one whose alliance will be of advantage, and whose beauty and merit will ensure your felicity; be always the brother, the friend of Leonora, she will ever esteem you as such, and rejoice in your happiness.

Ah, cruel Leonora, cried the afflicted Carlos, what a cool reward do you offer for so tender, so disinterested a passion as mine! No, I cannot be satisfied with respect and esteem for you; I will reject with contempt even a royal union, and were you in reality only the daughter of
poor

poor Sebastian, it would never alter my sentiments; your soul is too noble, too exalted for the trifling advantage of birth to afford you any additional lustre. In vain you try me, in vain would teach me to forget you; the very trial is impossible. Once more then, and perhaps for the last time, Carlos awaits his doom from the lips of Leonora; speak then, most beloved of women, consider, the chance of war may never afford me this poor privilege more.

Dangerous moment for a susceptible inexperienced heart, like that of Leonora. She had long struggled against her inclinations, she had opposed her respect and duty to the countess, against the force of love; but at this moment she could dissemble no more, tears streamed from her eyes. Carlos, she exclaimed, I am lost! and clasping her hands together, rested her head upon his shoulder.

Transported

Transported at this unexpected avowal of her tenderness, Carlos presumed to fold her to his heart. He thanked, he blessed, he promised her eternal gratitude.

Ah, why, said she, too insidious Carlos, why have you extorted from me a secret I wished to conceal even from myself? How shall I dare ever to behold your dear, your revered mother? I am become unworthy of her love, I have proved myself unworthy of her confidence, and broke the condition on which she promised me her friendship.

No, cried he, you are more deserving of it than ever; and I doubt not but one day the countess will applaud my choice.

They were now interrupted by the information that Gonsalvez was already on horseback. They bade an hasty adieu; and Carlos, restored to life and happiness, sprung lightly into his carriage, and waving

waving his hand to the ladies, disappeared swift as the wind.

Donna Almeria felt the absence of Carlos, whom she loved with real tenderness, but Leonora seemed as if she had lost the better half of herself. Almeria perceived her chagrin, and let some days elapse, ere she mentioned it ; but finding her melancholy rather increase than abate, she determined to speak.

Leonora, said she, you are no longer so candid with me as you used to be ; you behave with reserve, and as if you loved me no longer ; surely you do not regret more than myself the absence of Don Carlos !

Ah, madam ! exclaimed Leonora, and threw herself, almost suffocated, into the arms of Almeria, who affectionately embraced, and strove to sooth her.

Alas,

Alas, continued the weeping Leonora, how unworthy am I of all this tenderness ! I have betrayed your confidence, I have betrayed myself.

How ! interrupted Almeria affrighted, you love my son, and he is acquainted with it ; rash, ill-fated pair ! but proceed. I was unconscious of loving him, madam, continued she, till I feared to lose him ; his grief, his despair overwhelmed me, and revealed the too visible feelings of an undisguised heart ; I avowed sensations I never before felt. Ah, madam, you that know as well the emotions, the frailties of the human heart, why would you detain here a creature born to give you pain ? Why not have had me conveyed to my holy retreat ? I might have regretted the want of your society, I might have given a sigh to the remembrance of Don Carlos, but time and reflection would have rendered me wholly attentive to the state I intended to enter, and in contemplating the

the image of my God, I should soon have forgot that of Don Carlos ; but it is now too late ; you will hate me, but I had rather feel the effects of the most deadly rage than attempt to deceive you.

The softened Almeria mingled her tears with those of Leonora, all the tenderness of a mother filled her breast, and supporting her with her arm, be comforted, my love, said she, I only am to blame, I ought to have known better the force of your attractions, nor exposed to my son's continual view such inevitable danger ; even I cannot resist you, and though that one fatal sentence which has escaped your lips may cost me years of bitter regret, yet I will never forsake, nor be separated from you, except when the return of my son shall make it necessary awhile ; look up then, my sweet Leonora, fear not to meet my eyes with confidence, and return my embrace, as that of a fond mother.

Leonora,

Leonora, little suspecting Almeria's claim to that tender title, enraptured threw her arms round her, and exclaimed, Ah, that you were indeed my mother, Don Carlos would then be my beloved, my esteemed brother !

Donna Almeria's feelings were all awakened by this suggestion ; she dared not trust herself to reply, but abruptly quitted Leonora, who, reassured by her tenderness and indulgence, could not help entertaining some latent hope of being allowed to love Don Carlos, so prone is the human mind to catch at every trifle, however improbable, that accords with its favorite wish, animated by the pleasing flatterer. Leonora began to recover in part her native cheerfulness, they often heard from Don Carlos, nor was Leonora ever forgot in his letters.

We must now leave her, to enjoy with Almeria, a short lived dream of tranquillity,

lity, and mean time relate an occurrence, which was glorious to Carlos, and increased the rancor of his enemies.

Upon his arrival at court, he was presented by his uncle to Sancho, before whom he appeared with the same dignity of deportment as if he had never offended him.

Sancho, who expected to be addressed with submission, and an humble intreaty of forgiveness, was not master of his transports. Rash youth, cried he, has neither our displeasure nor the fear of our future resentment been able to subdue thy haughty spirit? Dost thou not know that thy life, fortune, and honors are in our disposal? That thou hast insulted us in our very palace!

I hold my life, replied Carlos, by the gift of heaven; my honors and my fortune, from my brave and noble ancestors.

VOL. I.

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Thou

Thou mayest take the latter at thy pleasure, but the former rests with me; I received them un sullied from my father, and un sullied will I bear them even beyond the grave.

My only offence has been, presuming to contradict a courtly minion, who, thinking himself secure beneath the smile of royalty, dared to insult me; if Don Pedro thinks himself still aggrieved, behold my gage, and let the force of arms decide our difference: but never will I disgrace the race of Mendoza by a mean submission.

We accept thy challenge in the name of our vassal, replied Sancho, less fiercely; to-morrow with the earliest dawn he shall await thee.

At the appointed time the lists were formed, the barriers shut; Sancho himself sat as judge, he was accompanied by all his court, and an innumerable throng
of

of spectators. Pedro arrived the first, his armour was richly embossed, and ornamented with many a gem; on his shield he bore a meridian sun, and his motto was, "Warmed by thy beams."

Carlos was not long behind. His arms were polished steel; on his helmet waved a plume, of snowy whiteness; and on his ponderous shield was displayed a phœnix, with these words, "There is not her equal." His courser seemed animated by the spirit of its master, he marched as if he disdained the very earth, and few could have sat him with the same ease as Carlos. He gracefully saluted the king and his courtiers, and taking his stand, he awaited the signal, which was no sooner given, than the two adventurers attacked each other sword in hand, with the utmost fury, having by mutual consent cast aside their lances.

Pedro at first appeared to have the advantage, but the superior skill and strength of Carlos soon turned the victory in his favor. Pedro, after receiving several wounds, fell from his saddle. Carlos instantly dismounted, and without insisting upon any acknowledgement of his victory, assisted him to rise, returned him his sword, and said, Our quarrel ends here, Don Pedro, my injured honor is fully satisfied; I have shewn that I am not to be insulted with impunity; and if I have, in my turn, offended, I here publicly ask your forgiveness.

Pedro, exhausted by his wounds, could only reply to Carlos by embracing him. Carlos returned it with infinite grace, remounted his fiery steed, bowed low to the king, and quitted the lists, amidst the general acclamations.

What noble arrogance! What heroic generosity! said Sancho to his prime minister,

nister, as they returned ; trust me, this proud boy, if not speedily removed, may cause my very throne to tremble.

Carlos, in the mean time, was perfectly satisfied with his victory, he returned to the palace of De Carma, and spends the day with his aunt.

That prudent woman saw with pain, part of her husband's intentions ; and having the greatest affection for her nephew, she endeavoured by her wise counsels to moderate his impetuosity. Don Carlos, in return for her friendly attachment, confided to her the whole circumstance relative to Leonora, and his mother's opposition to his passion. Felicia, not knowing her sister's reasons, advised her to comply for the present, but promised to interest herself in their behalf.

He passed several days with this amiable relation, before he received his final

orders for joining the army. The king, affecting to treat him with mere distinction, though in fact he shrunk before the bravery he admired, at parting he told him, he had recommended to his general that if any undertaking should occur worthy the display of his uncommon courage, he should have the sole merit of undertaking it. Carlos, elevated at this unexpected mark of distinction, thanked Sancho in the most animated manner, and departed, little imagining the treachery which lurked beneath the royal smiles. He only stopped to embrace his aunt, and conjure her not to abandon his interest with his mother.

Donna Felicia, mindful of her promise, and impatient to Almeria, whom she really loved, obtained permission of her husband, and set forwards for the castle of Mendoza; he the more readily granted it, as the mortal blow was just on the point of falling on the peaceful inhabitants.

Donna

Donna Felicia was received with great joy at the castle, and though prepared by a lover's description to be charmed with Leonora, yet when she beheld her, she could not help thinking that Carlos himself had not done her justice; she engaged warmly in her cause, and importuned Donna Almeria so much, that she determined, knowing her discretion, to entrust her partly with the secret, and therefore told her that family reasons obliged her for some time longer, to conceal so interesting an event, but that Leonora was actually her daughter.

So far as the secret respected herself, Almeria had no reserve with Felicia de Carma, but all that concerned the real birth of Don Carlos she carefully avoided. She well knew her attachment to the royal house, and the force she always put upon herself, to disguise it from her husband, and therefore was willing to spare her the uneasy hours such a discovery

would cause. Felicia lamented the passion of Don Carlos, and promised to use her endeavours to eradicate it from his breast, but her principal hope lay in his martial ardour, the strength of which she hoped would enable him to overcome every other passion. His exploits against the Moors resounded through all Spain, and Sancho was obliged to praise the man he most detested.

Donna Felicia had been about three weeks at the castle, when one morning Gonsalvez de Carma was hastily announced; he saluted them all three respectfully. Melancholy and dejection sat upon his brow; several times they enquired the cause, which he seemed studiously to avoid relating. At length, taking a hand of Almeria and Felicia, and heaving a profound sigh, the will of heaven be done! said he, with great emphasis. And ye most beloved of women, let your own innate virtues and sense of religion sustain
you

you in this trying moment. To you, my dear sister, turning to Almeria, I more particularly address myself, the heavy afflicting hand of sorrow lies upon you; to avoid its weight is impossible, and suspense is cruelty refined. Know then, (though I solemnly believe it false) that you are accused before God and the king of the blackest of all crimes, even that of poisoning your late husband, and his son being absent, myself, as next allied, am forced to sustain the charge against you.

Almeria heard no more; pale and agitated she had listened in dread of some dire mischance having happened to her beloved Carlos, but hearing herself accused of a deed so atrocious, that nature revolting, shudders to hear mentioned, her blood froze in her veins, and she fell senseless into the arms of the terrified Leonora.

All efforts were for some time used in vain to recal her absent senses; at length her temporary death subsided, she opened her eyes, and raising them to heaven, I appeal, cried she with all the energy of innocence, I appeal to that power who reads the hearts of men, and who will in his own good time manifest my truth to him. To that power which reads the hearts of men, I confide the justice of my cause!

Come, sir, continued she, addressing Gonsalvez, and endeavoring to collect all her fortitude, I must prepare to attend you, and confront my adversaries.

Donna Felicia and Leonora united every effort to comfort their injured friend, nor was the insidious Gonsalvez wanting in every soothing art; he sighed, protested; and cursed his cruel destiny, which forced him to enter the lists against her, though he secretly hurried on the fatal

fatal moment, left by the sudden return of Carlos, he might fall by his own snare.

Almeria, after the first shock her spirits had sustained, appeared calm and composed in so great a degree, that a less hardened villain than Gonsalvez would have been abashed before her firmness, but he was proof against every thing but the suggestions of villainy. He played his part to a miracle in the present instance, and busied himself with a thousand schemes to obtain Leonora, whose beauty more than ever fascinated his passions, but whose virtue awed and confounded him.

Almeria gave orders for quitting the castle with the utmost tranquility; she wished Leonora to remain there: if I triumph, said she, I will return immediately to you; if not, it will spare you much fruitless anxiety.

No, my generous friend, replied Leonora, my more than mother, never will Leonora quit thee in the moment of adversity ! I will attend thee, I will watch over thy woes with solicitous affection, and soothe the hours of poignant sorrow.

Almeria embraced her and assented to going. Alas, could she refuse in such a moment ? Could she deprive herself of the soothing of filial tenderness, when perhaps if guilt should walk securely, she might for ever lose her self-acknowledged child.

All the vassals crowded round the carriage which waited to convey them from the castle. Prayers for the safety of their beloved lady, and execrations upon her accusers, accompanied them some miles on their way. Gonsalvez in secret cursed the officious, but courteously dismissed them, telling them to rely upon Sancho's justice, and the innocence of their lady.

Alas,

Alas, my lord, replied one of the most venerable, of her innocence none can have a doubt; holy Mary herself is not more innocent; but ———. Proceed, said the count graciously, but what? Why, my lord, his majesty King Sancho may be very good to his particular favorites, but if good King Alphonso had lived, I and mine should not have groaned under oppressions which drove us for shelter to the walls of Mendoza. Gonsalvez started involuntarily, threw a ducat to the old man, and desired the carriage might proceed.

Animation had given the cheeks of Almeria its greatest glow. Treasure these words in thy heart, Leonora, said she, they may be useful. Gonsalvez, alarmed, sought to penetrate her meaning, but found it impossible.

They arrived shortly at Leon, and Almeria demanded an audience, with all the pride

pride of injured virtue. Sancho heard, and promised her an immediate trial, for which she earnestly begged, and Gonsalvez de Carma was to keep her in charge, and let her converse with no one.

She was always placid, but Leonora was tremblingly alive to apprehensions she could not quell, and whenever undisturbed, gave way to all the effusions of grief. Almeria always chid her despondency, and even essayed to be cheerful.

The intentions of her enemies were but half fulfilled; certain of condemning her when they pleased, they wished her to feel in some measure, by anticipation, the bitterness of death, and to effect it, improved a trifling occurrence the day before that fixed for her trial, Gonsalvez de Carma appeared before her like a man distracted, he abandoned himself to the most violent transports of fury, and deplored the tarnished honor of their name.

Almeria,

Almeria, trembling with anxiety, demanded the cause of his apparent anguish. He clasped his hands, struck his forehead, and exclaimed, Ah, unworthy Carlos ! Unworthy the name of Mendoza !

Impossible ! exclaimed both Almeria and Leonora.

The fact is but too clearly proved. A courier is this moment arrived with the fatal intelligence, that Don Felix de Pimento, general against the Moors, having ordered Don Carlos to attack with a division under his command an inferior part of the Moorish army, he feigned to obey, retired to his tent, where it is supposed he tampered with the fidelity of his soldiers, for in the depth of the night they disgracefully left the camp ; nor can their flight be traced.

Ah, beloved Carlos, cried the wretched Almeria, what a bitter affliction hast thou prepared

prepared me in this trying moment ! I could have sustained every attack of malice and ill-fortune without shrinking, had the felicity of knowing thee brave and worthy of thy great ancestors cheered the moment of misery.

Leonora was silent, but her emotion was not the less visible; her expressive countenance displayed the various passions of regret, sorrow, and compassion. She took the hand of her mother, and raised it to her lips, her voice faltered as she articulated "Carlos," and she was unable to proceed. Gonsalvez retired, pleased at the effects of his diabolical intention, and left them both a prey to unutterable anguish. Sleep was far from the eyes of either, and it was with the utmost difficulty the amiable and sympathizing Felicia could be persuaded to retire to rest.

For

For some time after he was gone, they kept a profound and mournful silence, which was at length broken by Almeria. To-morrow, my beloved Leonora, said she, may perhaps, notwithstanding my innocence, leave you friendless and unprotected. If condemned, I cannot make the smallest provision for you; and after the recent conduct of Don Carlos, little reliance ought to be placed upon his protection; and I think the man who forfeits his honor to his country's cause, is unworthy to excite any other emotion in the breast of a virtuous woman than that of contempt, much less should she choose him for her protector and guide; the veil must therefore be your resource; I have spoke to my sister, she will conduct you to the cloister; but if I live, we will never part. Don Carlos is become unworthy the affections of either, they shall centre in each other; we will weep in private for his degeneracy, but shew the world that
our

our souls are truly Spanish, and neither can bear, nor will seek to shield a coward.

Leonora replied with a deep sigh and many tears; her reason condemned Don Carlos, and yet her heart sought to justify him; she dared not trust her lips to reply, her feelings grew too powerful for utterance, and quitting the apartment, she determined to seek Donna Felicia, and pour those sorrows she feared would disturb her friend, into her bosom.

The morning just dawned, and nature smiling, awakened from her accustomed sleep, as Leonora crossed the court of the palace to gain the apartments of Felicia; the gates were not yet open, but the ears of Leonora were assailed by a loud clamour and confused sounds of many voices; the cries were those of joy, and she fancied that she distinguished the voice of Carlos. This idea gave additional speed to her steps to reach De Carma's apartments, to
rouse

rouse the sleepy domestics, and throw open the windows to catch again the joyful sounds, was but the work of a moment.

The gates were thrown open, and a messenger entered, followed by an immense crowd of people, already awakened by the joyful tidings.

The name of Carlos was re-echoed to the very heavens, and Leonora with clasped hands, and the unbidden tear straying down her beauteous cheek, leant forward to catch the first blest sound of returning honor to her beloved Carlos. She had followed Felicia to the apartment of Gonsalvez; he was giving audience to the messenger. On perusing the dispatches, envy scowled athwart his brow, he bit his lips, and would fain have concealed the news, but it was already too public; the increasing crowd, mad with joy, shouted incessantly, Victory and Don Carlos.

He

He turned to Felicia, our nephew, madam, has nobly retrieved the disgrace of a moment; instead of flying from the enemy, he boldly, under favor of the night, passed their army, and appeared before the walls of Saragossa, that famous city has fallen into his hands, with all the Moorish treasure; two hundred waggons laden with the spoils, are now upon the road to Leon. He suppressed every leading feature which might throw fresh glory upon Don Carlos's actions, but the deed itself spoke forcibly, and was its own eulogium.

Leonora flew with these joyful tidings to Almeria; breathless with haste, and overpowered by contending emotions, she could only exclaim, "He lives, he lives, worthy of all our fond affection, worthy of adoration!"

Who, cried Almeria, Don Carlos?
Heaven, I thank thee! Yes, madam,
continued

continued Leonora, your Carlos, your beloved son. Then leading her to the window, she made her listen to the distant sounds of public joy. Almeria, regaining composure from this unlooked for event, first returned thanks to heaven for affording her this temporary gratification, and next prepared herself for the awful moment of her trial. She shut herself up sometime with her confessor, and then requested to see Leonora. As she entered, Almeria exclaimed, Come to my arms, my beloved daughter, this holy man has taught me resignation to the will of heaven, I commend you wholly to the protection of Don Carlos, I rely wholly on his honor and your discretion; but I charge you both, as you value my blessing and your future peace, marry not, unless this reverend father gives his dispensation to the vow I solemnly demand from you at this moment.

Leonora

Leonora shuddered, but she took the required oath, and embraced Almeria, expressing her tenderness in the most lively manner.

The hour at length arrived, desired by Almeria and dreaded by Leonora, in which the former was to meet her accusers, and be cleared or condemned in the eyes of the world. The court was arranged, the judges seated, and Sancho himself presided at this awful tribunal. Felicia and Leonora sat behind a lattice, with many ladies of the court, at no great distance from the place where the lovely criminal was to stand.

An awful silence reigned; they waited for her alone. Every eye was moistened with pity, every breast throbbed with anxiety and fear; her spotless virtue, her unblemished life, and the recent victory of Don Carlos, conspired to raise her many friends, but they were also friends
whose

whose aid was too feeble to contend against the powerful enemies, hatred and ambition had leagued to destroy her.

She soon appeared, leaning on one of her esquires, and followed by two female attendants. Her cheerful countenance and magnificent habit displayed a mind at ease, and conscious innocence. Why, said she to those who offered her a mourning veil, why should I wear the semblance of that guilt my heart abhors? No, decorate me in my finest ornaments, and let me go adorned either for my justification on earth, or my re-union with my regretted lord.

Upon entering the court she saluted the king, judges, and spectators, with a modest grace. A confused murmur ran through the court, and Gonsalvez, fearing some disturbance in her favour, hurried the judges to commence their proceedings. Her accusation was read, and witnesses produced

produced to swear, that she knew and connived at the perpetration of her husband's death. The favored servant of Ramirez, who fled from the castle of Mendoza, was the principal evidence, he said there had been a great misunderstanding for some time between his lord and lady respecting Don Carlos, who had displeased his father by his haughty demeanour at court; that his lady had commended him for it, and had often threatened vengeance, and expressed her attachment to the late royal family, and her detestation to the present king; that he overheard her bribe a peasant to procure the fatal drug; and added, that the count complained the day he died, of a pain in his stomach, in consequence of which his lady offered him a cordial, which he had no sooner tasted than he fell back and expired.

Almeria was now called upon to reply, and thus addressed the tribunal:

I have

I have no witnesses to prove my innocence; those that should have done it, I plainly see are upheld against me; I therefore appeal to God and my own conscience, they will support me in this heavy affliction, and upon their truth I rely. Of thee, O king, I know but little; judge me as at the last day of awful retribution, thou expectest to be judged—by mercy! Yet if I may intreat a boon, it is the immediate presence of Don Carlos, let him appear and certify that his father never bore him hatred, and let the son vindicate his mother's honor; but if that poor request cannot be allowed, I must submit, for now I well know, that I have enemies great and powerful, to whose designs these poor deluded hirelings are but the instruments; but let them tremble, for they must all one day attend my summons, and meet me before an impartial and unerring tribunal, where the cries of innocence are never raised in vain.

During this discourse, her penetrating eyes had fixed alternately upon Sancho and his minister ; guilt could not sustain their beams. Sancho in particular changed colour, became restless and confused, he whispered his vile accomplice to hasten on. No sooner had Almeria ceased to speak, than the solemn silence so respectfully observed, gave place to a general murmur of applause, but notwithstanding the general voice in her favor, and the evident disagreement amongst those suborned against her, the predetermined judges hastened to pronounce the sentence, by which they adjudged her guilty, and sentenced her to be burnt alive three days after.

Notwithstanding all her fortitude, Almeria felt the shock of this cruel decree ; the blood forsook her cheeks, and she rested upon the shoulders of her attendants, whilst Leonora, uttering a loud and piercing shriek, sprung from behind the lattice which concealed her, caught the
lovely

lovely sufferer in her arms, and fainted. Softened by this scene of tenderness, and prepossessed of Almeria's innocence, all the people were loud in censuring the judges, who were even afraid to pass through the clamorous crowd. Gonsalvez de Carma, with well-feigned grief, advanced to sustain his sister and Leonora. He gazed on the latter till recollection had nearly forsaken him; nor did he see that Sancho's whole attention was fixed upon the same object.

De Carma conveyed them both to an apartment belonging to the count, in which the execution was to be performed. Leonora was inconsolable, and Almeria was obliged to soothe her, instead of receiving consolation at her hands. The greatest part of the three days she spent at her devotions; the rest of her short time in recommending Leonora for the present to her sister-in-law's protection. You will probably, said she in an emphatic tone,

know one day the claims she has to your love and friendship; and you, my beloved Leonora, turning towards her, be you the bearer of my last blessing to Don Carlos, tell him I have nothing to bequeath to him but you, and if he values the blessing of heaven, and his hopes of happiness, he will guard you truly; but remember your vow. Tell him death has lost half its bitterness, since I have found him worthy of his great ancestors; tell him I leave at a future day my fame and honor for him to vindicate; that there is a man who has dared to asperse my innocence, and that Carlos must wipe off that stain, and other wrongs of deeper dye; that proud man who dares ———.

She would have proceeded, but Gonzalvez de Carma entered the apartment, followed by the dreadful harbingers of death. For a moment Almeria appeared startled, but recollecting herself, she arose, and with the utmost tranquility embraced
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the perfidious De Carma, and his too amiable lady, and lastly Leonora, whose shrieks and endeavours to retain her loved protectress, struck even the heart of De Carma with remorse; his hand was already stretched forth to forbid the execution, but checking himself, he caught Leonora in his arms to hinder her from following Almeria, but he was obliged to turn away his face, lest guilt should stamp its legible characters on his brow. Ah, cried the sorrowful Leonora, turning to Gonsalvez, who still detained her, ah, suffer me to follow her for the last time; my cries shall not disturb her serenity, my tears shall not flow to grieve her!

De Carma softened, withdrew his hold; Leonora flew; Almeria was already in the hall, from whence she was to pass into the fatal court. The guards were around her; one of her weeping attendants was tying the bandage over the eyes of her be-

loved mistress, who, perfectly composed, leant upon the arm of her favorite Duenna.

Leonora rushed precipitately amongst them; her veil was torn, her hair dishevelled; yet in that moment not a sigh agitated her bosom, not a tear wetted her cheek, her eyes were wild and fixed, she strained her mother in her arms, she tore off the bandage which bound her forehead, exclaiming, look on me, my mother! behold your Leonora, she renounces life and all its enjoyments, she will not leave you; these inhuman wretches shall not separate us, I will perish with thee! Alas, how could I ever meet again the eyes of Don Carlos? although he spoke not, yet they would ask me of his mother.

The Countess de Mendoza's fortitude all now forsook her. Gracious Heaven! she cried, pity and pardon my weakness! Ah, Leonora, in this instant I must no longer dissemble, thou art my — daughter!—

ter!—my beloved Mendoza lives in thee! ———but, (and she recollected herself) what do I say! this is no time for endearments, my reason wanders; live, and console Don Carlos; live, and urge him to avenge his mother's murder; denied the common forms of justice, she dies branded with ignominy; and beware of him who most will court your smiles. She pronounced the last words with particular emphasis. She then tried, but all her efforts were not sufficient, to disengage her from the grasp of Leonora.

Knowing the people were disposed to pity her, under pretence of favor, no spectators were to be admitted, and the palace gates were shut. Almeria concluded they had some suspicions, and fearing Leonora might be involved in trouble, she stifled all her maternal feelings, and intreating the guards to force her away, she courageously advanced, and bound the bandage over her own eyes.

The guards obeyed, and dragged from her the struggling Leonora, whilst the executioners bound their trembling victim to the fatal pile.

At that moment a confused noise was heard at a distance—it approached—still nearer—the palace shook with the uproar and din of arms; loud cries resounded from afar, the Moors! the Moors! Leon is taken! Leonora heard this sudden burst, and unable to free herself from those who held her, she uttered the most piercing shrieks, exclaiming, O God, they will be too late! Alas, my beloved friend!

The flames had already begun to mount in circling clouds, and the hands of Almeria were raised in silent supplication towards heaven.

When the tumult redoubled at the gates, shouts of victory echoed through the spacious

cious court, the massy gates gave way, their ponderous bars fell with a mighty noise, and a tumultuous crowd rushed in; five Moors with about twenty Spanish soldiers were at their head..

The chief of the Moors exclaimed in Morisco Alla, What do I behold! and with one blow dispatched the wretched executioner, and snatched the astonished Almeria from the blazing pile; Leonora now at liberty and wild with transport, assisted to free her friend.

You are safe, madam, said the gallant stranger in bad Spanish, and I have partly fulfilled my obligations to Don Carlos.

My son, exclaimed the countess—your obligations—surely to save a mother Don Carlos has not betrayed his country. It is alone madam to the fears of a mother too easily alarmed, that such a suspicion is allowable. He had scarce finished when

the cries redoubled, and from another avenue, the furious Carlos advanced sword in hand ; the noble Moor met him ; our enterprize has succeeded, said he ; behold your mother.

Carlos was already at her feet, she rais'd him in her arms, and the tears of joy dropped on his face, she turned from him to Leonora, who, overcome with her emotions, fainted in the arms of the noble Moor. Don Carlos was now cited in the name of the king, to appear and give some reason for so extraordinary a proceeding : without replying he took his mother by the hand, and followed by Leonora and his brave friends, entered undaunted into the hall, which was already crowded with spectators.

He approached the throne of Sancho and laid his sword at his feet.

I have

I have fought, my sovereign, said he, to support your throne, my deeds speak for themselves, amid the rage of war; I heard the accusation against my mother, it was the duty, the task of a son to justify her; I asked permission of your general and was refused; nature and reason at that moment suggested, that in such a cause all petty forms should be disdained, my country vindicated wanted not then my aid, and listening to these dictates, I disobeyed your haughty general, left the camp and hastened hither, trembling for the days of an innocent, an injured woman. I demanded an audience and was refused; time pressed, compassionate crowds were pitying my mother, filial piety blessed their honest grief, and they aided me to save her. If I have displeased thee, punish me, wreak all thy vengeance here, but spare my mother; let her accusers appear, I will justify her before thee, or spill the last drop of my blood in the attempt. He ceased.

Then Sancho, perceiving that the very breath of Don Carlos might raise again the tumult, which had so dreadfully alarmed him, to the surprize of every one, but of none more than Don Carlos, descended from his throne, and embraced the young warrior.

I might call your present attempt, young man, said the arch dissembler, rash and treasonable ; but your motive seals your pardon, and far outweighs the deed ; Heaven knows how much I have regretted your mother's fate, and even now I cannot violate justice and the laws, by snatching her out of their hands ; but in consideration of your great services, I will suspend her sentence and decree, that if in a year and a day, her accusers cannot bring more presumptive proof of her guilt, they shall be severely forced to combat her champion, and if conquered by him, the Countess de Mendoza shall be at liberty ; mean time herself and her
accusers

accusers shall be strictly guarded. The people all applauded this sudden clemency of their king; but Don Carlos was irresolute, he held her hand, he could not reconcile to himself, the idea of leaving his mother again in the power of his enemies, well knowing that fear alone had operated in her favor; but Almeria herself decided the contest. Fear not, my son, said she, Providence will never forsake me, pursue your glorious course, remember from whom your mother is descended, and let me hear your praises from the depth of my prison; she tenderly embraced both him and Leonora, made a lowly reverence to the king, and resigned herself into the hands of her guards. Leonora retired with Felicia; Carlos could only follow her with his eyes, the presence of so many witnesses restraining his delight at seeing her again. The king again thanked him for his good services, and told him, that as it was not in his power to grant him his mother's freedom, he would not refuse him

him any other boon he chose to ask ; Carlos did not hesitate ; but asked the free disposal of all the Moorish captives, fallen to his lot in the capture of Saragossa. Sancho granted the favor, and Carlos retired to seek the noble Moors, and impart their happiness to them ; he knew not what it was to exult over an enemy in his power, and by his generosity and princely manners had gained their esteem ; they carried their admiration of him to the highest pitch imaginable, when he told them they were free as he was.

Gratitude effected, what compulsion never could have done, and prostrate on the ground thanked their generous deliverer, and swore everlasting esteem ; their chief rushed into his arms, and bound himself never to lift his sword against his benefactor. I am again, cried he, a Moorish prince, command brave Carlos my life, my troops, my all.

Carlos

Carlos listened with impatience to the effusions of gratitude ; so long under the same roof with Leonora, and not able to see her, cruel delay, each moment seemed an age ; but the Countess de Carma relieved his impatience, by sending for him to her apartment, where, under the seal of secrecy, she told him to beware of himself ; that Sancho's pretended friendship covered some dark design (what, she had not been able to learn) but that he meant to seize him and the Moorish prisoners that night.

Carlos, mad with fury, returned to the Moors, told them in a few words the urgency of the case, provided them with guides, and conjured them to lose no time, in escaping from the treachery of Sancho ; left them equally surprized at the generosity of their conqueror and the baseness of the king.

Carlos

Carlós quitted them, but it was neither to seek the repose necessary after his toils, nor yet the soft society of Leonora; but accompanied by Don Alvarez and Don Pedro, he entered the royal apartments, and found Sancho furrounded by his courtiers and dependants, amusing the heavy hours by a game at chess.

Don Carlos entered suddenly and unexpected, he advanced sternly towards the king, the very courtiers shrunk before his frown.

Is it true, oh king of Spain, said he, that in defiance of honor, and the sacred word of royalty, more binding to the just than the most sacred vows, you intended this night to rob me of my captives?

Sancho deliberated how to answer, he was conscious of the design, and yet feared to provoke Don Carlos; the events of the morning having proved how much
he

he was esteemed by the people, many ideas rolled in his mind ; at length, break-silence,

You are too hasty, Don Carlos, said he ; it was not my intention to deprive you of the captives, once accorded by our royal word ; but I wished them to be examined before a proper council, in order to obtain some knowledge of their strength, their riches, and the discipline of their forces ; but that office you may perform with less suspicion, as from your hand they will receive the gift of liberty. He paused in expectation of an answer, but the request he had made to Don Carlos was of too mean a nature, for his high soul to comply with. He darted a look of ineffable contempt at Sancho, and quitted the apartment, ere the astonished king could recover his recollection sufficiently to order him to be recalled.

Gonsalvez

Gonsalvez de Carma was obliged to use all the eloquence he was master of, to induce Carlos to return. What, should a descendant of the houses of Alphonso and Mendoza be guilty of mean deliberate treachery, take advantage of a moment of gratitude, to betray a fallen enemy? No, perish rather, Sancho and all his race, so that the Spanish honor should remain untarnished, once more, in the royal presence. The king demanded why he was treated with such manifest disrespect; it ill befits a subject, Don Carlos, continued he, to assume such arrogant superiority; I condescended before to intreat; but now I insist upon the sole disposal of the Moorish prisoners; reasons of state demand them, and upon your allegiance I command you to obey; this was inflaming the already enraged Carlos to a pitch of fury almost beyond his reason: he instantly replied, my father taught me the duty, which every subject owes to a sovereign, and likewise the limits of that duty; his

his precepts were too noble, his instructions too refined, to be easily effaced from my memory; but at the same time, that he taught me how to obey, he did not fail to inform me how a king ought to reign, and the duties they in return owe to their subjects; if thou hast strictly fulfilled every duty thy elevated situation demands; if thy present request is perfectly consistent with justice and the laws of honor and equity, I confess my error, and acknowledge I deserve reproof; but much I fear the united voice of thousands, who groan under the iron rod of arbitrary power, will, in despite of the adulation which surrounds and blocks every avenue to the throne, pierce at last through the veil, and tell thee thou hast erred. I see the gathering frown, but I fear it not; secure in conscious rectitude, I disdain to cringe and deprecate the gathering storm, alone let me meet it, for, aware of thy perfidy, the noble Moors are, ere this, far on their way to the land of friends, safe from the
grasp

grasp of ambitious tyranny, and public violation of sacred faith ; I will answer for them in whatever manner you think fit, death or life are equally indifferent from the hands of Sancho. The king enraged, started from his seat, and advanced a few steps towards the intrepid Carlos.

De Carma, more cool than his master, remembered the events of the morning, the shouts of the approving crowd which aided the filial zeal of Carlos, and exalted his name to the heavens ; he stopped his master, bade him in a whisper be calm, and leave his revenge to him.

Sancho checked his violence, and with an agitated voice bade Don Carlos retire, and wait his farther pleasure.

Gonsalvez, with his usual policy, accompanied his nephew, soothed, flattered, and at last gained a promise that he would never again irritate the king. He conducted

ducted him to his own apartments, and forming an artful tale to Felicia, gained her to his side, and she promised to persuade Carlos to make some submission. He then returned to his master, to plan a diabolical scheme, which had nearly deprived Leon of its only hope.

Leonora meantime was a prey to the keenest emotions of grief; at the moment that she bewailed the severe lot of Donna Almeria, she was trembling for the life of the impetuous Carlos; tears of bitter anguish chased each other down her cheek, and she was overwhelmed with woe, when Felicia entered her apartment followed by Don Carlos, upon whose brow hung a cloud, which even the sight of Leonora could not disperse.

My dear Leonora, said the countess, aid the wishes of his friends, and persuade Don Carlos to submit a little to the necessity of the times, nor draw upon himself

self the hatred and resentment of the king. My arguments have all failed, my influence has been exerted in vain, to you I commit our common cause, for we must all be involved in the disgrace of Don Carlos.

Leonora was going to speak, but Carlos prevented her, by throwing himself at her feet ; forbear, cried he, Leonora, I could not resist your solicitation, every wish of yours I would gratify, though everlasting remorse were to ensue ; even now if you command, this proud heart shall submit before the king, stifle its resentment, although it should burst with indignation. But surely Leonora will not desire me to dissemble even for a moment ; and by heaven, at the next stroke of arbitrary power, the dormant flame shall blaze at once, and avenge my parent's wrongs, for they have been foully injured.

Leonora

Leonora looked at them both, her heart told her Don Carlos could not err, and yet Donna Felicia was not prone to judge amiss. The latter was soon called away, and left Don Carlos at full liberty to express all his love to Leonora; he pressed her to be his, and to accompany him into Portugal, but she resisted all intreaty, grounding her refusal upon the last commands of Donna Almeria; they startled Don Carlos a little, and he agreed to wait the developement of this important mystery.

Leonora seized this moment of calm, and intreated him to hide his resentment against the king; she set forth the ill consequences which might befall even his good uncle, if he persisted; and was proceeding with all the gentle eloquence of persuasion, when Carlos interrupted her, and pressing her hand to his heart, dear Leonora, said he, to be justified in your eyes is the first wish of my heart; from this moment I
banish

banish all reserve, reign sole mistress of my soul, and be the confidant of all my cares, your approbation will outweigh the rewards of royalty; listen then whilst I reveal a tale, at which the gentle nature of Leonora will shudder at the dangers of her Carlos, and wonder at his forbearance in the presence of such monsters. On your silence I need not expatiate; particularly to my aunt, the black recital would pain her generous bosom, and fill her with perpetual fears.

Know then, my Leonora, that after my departure for the camp, it was obvious to every person as well as myself, that the general ordered me and my brave knights upon every service that was adjudged dangerous, indeed I may add, desperate. I was fortunate enough to acquire renown, and extort commendations from Don Felix; I returned late one evening from harrassing the outskirts of the Moorish army, and had taken a convoy of their provisions;

provisions; fatigued in mind as well as body, I threw myself on a bed, and Leonora alone occupied every thought, when I was informed by a centinel, that a young cavalier just arrived, had made enquiry after me, and requested immediate admission. I was hastily rising, not doubting but this stranger brought news from the castle of Mendoza, but his impatience would admit of no delay, he entered, and I beheld before me Don Pedro, the very Pedro whom I thought my enemy. Be not offended, Don Carlos, said he, that I have thus forced myself into your presence; my business is of that importance, that a moment's delay would be dangerous; order that no one interrupt us. This being complied with, he threw himself into my arms. First, Carlos, said he, receive the proffered friendship, and be assured that the life of Pedro is yours if occasion requires it. You are surprized at this unexpected proffer from a man who once dared to treat you with such unpa-

ralleled insolence, but it is yourself that has wrought the change, from you I have learnt to respect men not according to their rank, but their merits; and I do not blush to acknowledge this obligation to him who has conferred it, and at the same time taught me so useful a lesson; in return I am fortunate enough to be able to render you some service.

My father, you need not be told, was one of Alphonso's firmest adherents, he fell in defending the cause of his beloved and injured master; I was too young to feel his loss, and my youthful mind was susceptible of every impression. Sole heir to vast possessions, Sancho thought I might one day become useful to him, he therefore, under the pretence of being father to the distressed orphan, took the charge of me, caused me to be educated in his own principles, and early instilled into my youthful mind the highest ideas of his justice and rectitude. My mother retired
into

into a convent ; I saw her but seidorn. A slave to pride and pleasure, the gay world alone had charms for me, and I gave myself up to the unbounded gratification of my passions ; of my insolent demeanour you had a sufficient proof. The day after our dispute, my mother, who was always well informed of my transactions, sent for and severely reprov'd me ; it was the first time she ever spoke to me in so harsh a strain.

I replied to her remonstrances with all the energy of passion—I envied you (it is fit my excuse should be as ample as my crime) ; I envied the noble deeds and heroic sentiments my abject slavery precluded me from imitating. I attempted to disparage Don Carlos before my mother, but she would not hear me with patience. Rash boy, cried she, recollect and shrink at thy own unworthiness ; Don Carlos, by a uniformity of conduct, and unshaken magnanimity, treads worthily in

the steps of his great ancestors, whilst thou hast degenerated from the virtues of thine, and accepted benefits from the murderer of thy prince. Ah, could thy noble father rise again from the abode of death, he would rather behold thee at his feet, extended a breathless corpse, than see thee cherished in the bosom of an infamous usurper; presume not again to enter the presence of a mother whose breast glows with unshaken loyalty to her country; whilst thou art leagued with its oppressors.

I attempted to justify my conduct, but she left the grate without deigning to hear me. I sent repeatedly to request another interview, but she was deaf to all intreaty, being well assured, my inclinations remained unshaken.

I returned home confounded, humbled, and awake to feelings I had never before experienced. The challenge sent me by the king in your name, could never have
arrived

arrived at a more unseasonable moment; I dared not refuse it, and I prepared to stifle every sentiment of tenderness towards my mother, and all emotions excited by your generosity; I resolved to meet you as a rival, with whom I was to dispute for glory.

The night preceding the combat Sancho sent for me, and presuming upon those principles he had endeavoured to instil into my mind, he proposed a means of insuring certain victory to my sword. I blush at the bare relating that such a thing should ever have been suggested to me.

He presented me a phial, and advised me to dip my sword in the poison it contained, and which was of so subtle a nature, that if blood was once drawn, it would convey certain death.

I shuddered at the horrid, the diabolical intention; my whole frame grew agi-

tated ; with difficulty I repressed emotions arising from shame, and the conscious difference between us. I told the king I did not doubt but I should conquer you fairly, without any aid but my own natural strength.

The king certainly looked upon this as an effusion of youthful pride ; he shook his head as if he doubted my skill, but mentioned the poison no more.

You conquered, and convinced me at the same time, that you was worthy to subdue me.

Sancho, during my confinement, visited me in person, and, probably judging from himself, that my soul was sufficiently contracted to delight in revenge, he planned in my apartment, the scheme of your ruin. Don Felix had orders to send you on every expedition which might be dangerous, and if your superior genius and
unequalled

unequalled valor surmounted every difficulty, in the first general attack he had positive orders to assassinate you.

Penetrated with horror, my thoughts turned inward on myself; I saw the usurper in his true colours, and cursed the insidious counsels of my preceptors; a wish to retrieve the years of virtue I had lost, made me hasten my recovery, and persuade the king to let me join the army, fully resolved to declare to you the direful intentions of your enemies, or, if disappointed in my intention, to perish in your defence, at the moment the bloody orders of Sancho should be put in execution.

Pedro ceased. I could not but be charmed with him; we mutually promised never to forsake each other; we consulted how I might evade the snares of Sancho, and yet preserve my honour: the task was difficult. We knew the first general assault was to be that of Saragossa, on the

strength of which the Moors greatly relied, and where they had actually deposited their chief treasures, for safety. In consequence of Sancho's orders, we had every reason to suppose I was destined to fall there. We took measures accordingly, and I disposed my little body of troops to second my designs.

On the following evening, as soon as it became dark, we began a long and rapid march, with secrecy and silence; this gave rise to the report of my flight, but the charge of my having disobeyed orders was an addition my malicious uncle thought fit to make. On the evening of the third day, my little troop of brave knights and faithful soldiers arrived before Saragossa. Judge my surprise, the Moorish army, which we were in our camp taught to believe at a great distance, lay encamped under the walls in the most perfect security.

Pedro

Pedro was the first that drew his sword, and with an intrepid countenance, turning to our followers, come on, my friends, cried he, if it be your leader's fate to fall before this city, let us at least be seconding nobly his efforts; procure him an honourable death. My brave soldiers, whose honest hearts burnt with indignation at the treachery meant me, were unanimous to a man, in resolving to perish by my side.

Convinced of their courage, I would not give the Moors time to observe our very small number, but under cover of the night immediately charged them: our word was, "Leonora," it was given by Pedro. My former success against the Moors, had rendered me rather formidable, amongst them; my name re-echoed through our ranks, seemed to strike them with terror.

The night was so cloudy, that they imagined the whole of the Spanish army had surprized them, panic-struck, they resisted but little, and were soon put to flight. The general, with as many of his broken troops as he could rally, threw themselves into the city; we pursued our advantages, and though the gates were defended with the utmost bravery by men grown desperate by misfortunes, yet ere day-break the Spanish ensign waved from its lofty turrets. The Moorish general, finding resistance vain, surrendered at discretion, I flew to stop the rage of slaughter, and the impetuosity of the soldiers, who had already begun to plunder the unfortunate inhabitants. Most of them desisted at my command; I sent a messenger to Don Felix, who highly applauded our action; he moved to Saragossa with the main army. Alvarez found me at that juncture, and unfolded before me a scene of the most treacherous iniquity; from him I learnt the accusation and danger of
my

my mother, and the active part Gonsalvez de Carma took against her.

You start, and seem incredulous, my Leonora, thy gentle nature is a stranger to distrust; the horrid demon of treachery, and murder stalks unsuspected by thy side; be cautious, my beloved, my affianced Leonora, or all our promised happiness will be blasted in the bud; your present safety now demands all my care; I will not presume to combat your delicate scruples, or persuade you clandestinely to be mine, but I expect you will rely sufficiently upon Mendoza's honour to suffer him to convey you out of the reach of danger.

Leonora gave him her hand with an enchanting smile, promised to be wholly directed by him, and never to be another's. Carlos was going to express his raptures at her generous confidence, but was interrupted by a message from his uncle, re-

questing to see him. He instantly complied. The melancholy imprinted on the brow of Gonsalvez, and the tender concern visible in his manner, might have imposed upon his nephew, if he had not received indisputable proof of his baseness; but as this was not a proper season for disclosing the measure of his crimes, he determined to check his resentment, and still the voice of his wrongs; he accordingly folded his arms, and silently listened to a long harangue, in which Gonsalvez lamented bitterly the misfortunes of his family, and finished by acquainting him that the king was too much enraged for even an attempt to sooth him, and that the mildest award he could procure was, banishment; retire therefore, my dear nephew, continued he, till this time of affliction is past, and take with you the beauteous Leonora. With joy I would protect her till happier days, but heaven knows how soon my fate may follow yours.

Carlos

Carlos was still composed, he bowed, it is enough, this night I will obey, tell Sancho compliance accords at this moment with my wish; but if I again revisit Spain, his throne shall tremble, his deeds of usurpation shall be all revealed, and Leon scorn the murderer.

He fought his aunt and Leonora, and acquainted them with this new turn of fortune; we shall then lose you my dear nephew, cried Felicia, embracing him; unfortunate Mendoza, what gloomy fate hangs over thy wretched head.

Carlos bowed upon her hand, excellent woman, said he, thou canst feel the woes of others, though far removed from their participation; may the sun of prosperity ever gild thy days, and virtue inshrined in thy form, meet its reward on earth; for thee my Leonora, I bless the providence which doubtless inspired my mother to defer our marriage: the Countess de
Carma

Carma can better protect your innocence than myself, she will shield you from every danger, and at a future period heaven will perhaps shed a more propitious influence on our love. Farewell.

Overcome with his emotions, Don Carlos would have left the room, but Leonora stopped him.

Don Carlos, said she, you know but little of the woman you honor with your love. If you imagine her capable of enjoying one moments repose, whilst she knows you to be miserable at this moment, who shall dare to censure my conduct, if I avow that my affections, and my esteem, centre all in you; yes, my Lord, at this moment that you are banished and oppressed, I love you more ardently, than when of late I beheld you conqueror of the Moors, and heard your name waisted with glory to the heavens; give instant order for our departure, and if the vows
of

of Leonora can restore tranquility to your soul, hear her take God and man to witness, she never will be another's.

Don Carlos caught her in his arms, he could scarce express his thanks, but hastened, with his fine eyes beaming pleasure, to give orders for their departure.

They were soon ready, and took but few attendants with them. Gonsalvez de Carma tenderly embraced them, and Don Pedro promised soon to follow his friend. As the lofty battlement of Leon disappeared from their view, the two wanderers felt relieved; Don Carlos, for the sake of his Leonora, would have stopped without the walls to await the dawn, but she felt not fatigue or fear: every thought was for Carlos, and she wished him safe from the snares of Sancho; they travelled therefore many hours without halting, but at length Leonora growing weary, they turned aside out of the road, and seating themselves

themselves under some shady trees, partook of the refreshments their servants carried. Here Carlos found himself at liberty to entertain his beloved Leonora with the ardent effusions of his love.

They looked forward to the hopes of smiling days, with all the eagerness of youth; at length Leonora and her women retiring to a small distance, gave themselves up to the sweet influence of repose. Carlos lost in thought, contemplated his happiness, Leonora committed to his charge, continually near her, beloved by her, his words, his looks unrestrained, what bliss, what raptures! He threw himself on the grass, and enjoyed a short rest, more sweet than he had ever experienced beneath the lofty dome of his forefathers.

Leonora was awakened by a rustling amongst the bushes close to her, she started up, and calling upon Carlos, flew to seek him; roused at her well known voice, the
hero.

hero was already upon his feet, and received the affrighted Leonora in his arms. Upon being informed of her terrors, he called aloud for his domestics, and ordered them to search the wood; he then soothed and reassured Leonora, making light of her fears, by asserting that another night would place them beyond the reach of Sancho's power. This calm was but of short duration; his people returned, telling him the wood was beset by armed men, and no avenue left for their escape.

Carlos bravely resolved to perish in defence of his Leonora, and she as strongly conjured him not to let her fall alive into the hands of the Moors, for she had no idea of any other enemy. The little troop of Carlos gathered round their master, and prepared to receive their adversaries. They were not long kept in suspense, Spanish soldiers issued from every quarter of the wood, and assailed the undaunted Carlos. Desperation, added to his native
valour,

valour, rendered him invincible ; he fought, covered, and sustained his fainting friends, reanimated the half-dying Leonora by his voice, and thundered again upon his foes ; but what could the strength of one man avail against the opposed force of many hundreds, for several hours he fought, till wearied, and exhausted with fatigue and loss of blood, he fell at the feet of Leonora, who observing an uplifted sword ready to pierce his heart, gave a loud shriek, and fainted on his body ; she was soon awakened to the sense of her misery, by a fresh noise of fighting, and she beheld Gonsalvez de Carma driving the enemies of Carlos before him, who, although they had so bravely fought against that hero, seemed scarce to resist the blows of Gonsalvez, but fled before him like a herd of timorous deer. Gonsalvez approached her ; beauteous Leonora, said he, how fortunate has been my passing at this moment, let me conduct you to some place of shelter.

Ah,

Ah, think not on me, cried Leonora faintly, and repulsed his hand which he offered to raise her; first think on Don Carlos, and assist him.

My nephew! exclaimed De Carma, in surprize, where is he? Leonora, who had now regained her recollection, shrieked aloud, and looking about her, ah, my God! cried she, they have conveyed him hence, but now he fell here at my feet, covered with wounds, perhaps expiring.

Gonsalvez assured her that could not be the case, that Carlos had fallen perhaps accidentally, but he had reason to believe he had recovered, pursued, and defeated the enemy in another quarter of the wood. They are, added he, a party of freebooters we have long wished to destroy.

At the bare probability of Carlos existing, Leonora became more composed, but no intreaties could prevail on her to
leave

leave the wood without some intelligence of him. She did not wait long, for a soldier came up and informed them that Don Carlos, after performing prodigies of valour, was taken prisoner. Gonsalvez had need of all his eloquence to pacify her; he assured her that no means should be left untried to regain him, and after some time Leonora suffered herself to be conducted back to Leon, where she was received by Donna Felicia with the most sincere affection.

It was some time before that excellent woman could restore any kind of calm to the wretched Leonora; to find herself almost at the same moment deprived of every tie capable of endearing life to her, was almost too much for mortality to bear, and Leonora was no philosopher.

Hurry of business so engrossed the time of Gonsalvez, that he saw Leonora but seldom, yet those moments passed with
her

her appeared the most delicious of his life, whilst on the contrary, her hatred towards him daily gained ground. She saw but too well his marked assiduity, and it disgusted her; but she had yet to learn how far his high wrought villany had been carried. As she was one day passing a gallery of the palace, she cast her eyes accidentally upon one of the guards, his face was not unknown, and made her shudder; it was one of the assassins which had attacked them in the wood. Seized with sudden fear, she uttered a shriek of horror, and flew back to her apartment. She was scarcely entered, ere she was told, that a soldier, charged with orders from the Count de Carma, requested admittance: it was the same man.

When they were alone, he flung himself at the feet of Leonora; pardon, madam, said he, a wretch tormented with the most agonizing pangs of conscience, at
your

your feet let me expiate my offence, and swear to exist in future only to serve you.

Leonora bade him arise and tell her the fate of Don Carlos. Of him, madam, replied he, I know nothing; many reports are gone abroad, but none of them merit belief; but of this be assured, if the dagger of an assassin has reached the heart of Don Carlos, that assassin is the Count de Carma. To warn you against him, I have boldly ventured to forge his orders, and by pretended zeal and fidelity, I shall alone be able to serve you.

Leonora thanked him, and took from her finger a rich diamond, which she offered, but Gaspar refused it: let me serve you first, my dear lady, and then in token of success allow me to claim that ring, I can then wear it without a blush. Be on your guard: I dare stay no longer from my post.

Leonora,

Leonora, left alone, began to ruminate on what she had heard, and meditated the means of escaping, resolved, if no other alternative offered, to throw herself into the protection of the Moors. Thus musing and pensive, Leonora leant on a balcony which overlooked the royal gardens, her long robe flowed loosely round her, a band of pearls partly confined her exuberant tresses, and her veil thrown back and agitated by the wind, added new grace to her appearance.

Unconscious of exciting admiration, her fixed and vacant eye saw not the surrounding objects; tears flowed fast down her cheeks; - and sighs ruffled her breast. She was excessively startled at hearing a voice very near her exclaim, Heavens, what an angelic form! Does no one know her? Who is she?

Leonora blushed, and withdrew. The Countess de Carma instantly entered,
Ah,

Ah, my love, what new trial awaits thee! Sancho has certainly beheld thee from the balcony, and is now coming to my apartment. She had scarce spoke ere he entered with several courtiers. He paid his compliments to the countess, but his attention was wholly fixed by Leonora. He gazed at her till he almost forgot what or who he was. The modest Leonora, with downcast eyes and averted head, shunned his eager glances, and in spite of every endeavour, a silent tear stole down.

What means this grief, beautiful stranger, said the king, gallantly taking her hand, you seem brooding over secret sorrow; speak freely, if the power of Sancho can relieve you, use it at your discretion. Leonora felt the tide of joy rush tumultuously to her heart; she clasped her hands, and sinking at the feet of Sancho, exclaimed, ah, pity then the wretched house of Mendoza.

It

It was the fate of Leonora to fascinate most in the moment of distress. Sancho till now wholly occupied by ambition and war; the obdurate, the inflexible Sancho, felt the force of love, and paid the tribute of admiration to the charms of Leonora; although the house of Mendoza was more hateful to him than ever, yet he could not wholly refuse his lovely pleader. He raised her from the ground, assured her he would himself protect the injured Almeria in the hour of danger, and revoke the banishment of Don Carlos, if he yet lived; but, added he, his fate is wrapt in mysterious uncertainty, and though strict search has been made, no intelligence of him can be procured.

A smile of expressive gratitude beamed over the dejected countenance of Leonora, at this unexpected clemency of Sancho; he spent two hours with them, and retired charmed with the wit and conversation of Leonora, and did not fail to recommend

her strongly to the countess De Carma, desiring she would often bring her to court.

Leonora thanked the king gracefully for the honour he did her, but prudently declined it, adding, that the knowledge of his majesty's esteem was sufficient; the splendour and magnificence of a court having but little charms for her, nor was she capable of enjoying any pleasure whilst the house of her benefactress was covered with disgrace and obloquy.

The countess De Carma was delighted with Leonora's prudence. We will go into the country, said she, you shall appear no more at court; I dreaded your attractive grace, but happily Sancho appeared only interested in your sufferings.

Some days after Gonsalvez came into the apartment, and found the two ladies together; he seemed deeply chagrined,
and

and accosted Felicia with more than usual tenderness; I know, said he, your partiality for the charming Leonora, and rely so firmly on your known discretion, that I am going to divulge a secret to you, which if known, would probably cost me my life. The king is become enamoured of Leonora, frantically so, for he has even charged me with the vile task of endeavouring to render her subservient to his wishes, but I know too well the grandeur of her soul, the nobleness of her virtue, and I condemn the thought, as I do the vile proposer.

Leonora turned pale; Felicia shuddered. Let me fly, cried the former, aid me to escape from the power of Sancho.

But whither can you fly, replied the count; concealment is impossible within the territories of Sancho, and precipitate flight would only irritate his vile passions; we must endeavour by policy to evade the

threatening storm; absence may possibly accomplish what we wish. I will feign myself ill, and we will retire for the present to the castle of Mendoza, being farther from Leon than my own; if he perseveres in disturbing her repose, we must think on some other scheme for the deliverance of Leonora.

Felicia applauded her husband's resolution and design, but Leonora could not help suspecting, and proposed to go to a monastery; there, said she, I shall be at peace, Sancho will not violate that holy asylum; and I shall law down upon my friends his vengeance. The mention of a monastery almost threw Gonsalvez off his guard, and he protested violently against the measure, assuring her that sacrilege itself would not deter Sancho from effecting any purpose he found himself opposed in. Felicia joining in the intreaty, Leonora, though unwillingly, was obliged to comply. The Count de Carma now counterfeited illness, and applied for permission

mission to breathe a freer air. The king was chagrined, but saw the necessity of complying for the present.

The day of their departure was seen with regret by Sancho, but he flattered himself that ere they returned, Gonsalvez would have disposed Leonora to listen to him with complacency.

The count pretending the utmost fear for the safety of Leonora, caused her to reside apart from them, in an old part of the castle, which had not for many years been deemed habitable; the servants who had the care of it never ventured into that wing after dusk, its gloomy appearance and desolated walls possessed those of weak imaginations with horror; the massy doors turned slowly on their creaking hinges, and the bird of night shrieked on the mouldering roof. All wondered when they found it was to be partly inhabited,

and heard the Count de Carma give orders for that purpose.

Leonora and Felicia shuddered as they passed the cheerless galleries, which were finely adorned with trophies, which had for succeeding generations heaped accumulated horrors on the house of Mendoza. Some of the apartments contained family pictures, amongst which were those of the former friends of Leonora. She gazed on the lifeless canvases with ardent pleasure, and the tears swelled to her eyes; but in the apartment destined for Felicia hung the portrait of Don Carlos. She expressed such delight at seeing it, that her aunt, unknown to her, had it conveyed to hers. Leonora was charmed with this fresh proof of her aunt's attention, and she had nothing to reproach Gonsalvez with, as he behaved with the most profound respect. Under pretence that the air would be serviceable to her health, he persuaded Leonora to ride out with him very early in

in the mornings. For several weeks he kept up this semblance of honour; Leonora almost forgot his repeated perfidy, except when the remembrance of Don Carlos returned with a sigh. But a letter dispatched from Sancho, by the hands of a special messenger, drove Gonsalvez almost to the brink of desperation; it pressed his return, to reassume the reins of government, and finished by adding, he could no longer exist without Leonora; the Count therefore found he must precipitate matters, and took occasion the next day,] as they returned from their morning excursion, to talk with Leonora upon the extreme delicacy and danger of her situation; he lamented pathetically, that Sancho should ever have seen her, and in an artful manner, covered with abundant respect, introduced his own passion, extolled his own honour and her virtues to the skies, and concluded with saying, that although he esteemed, nay, even revered his wife, yet he could not help acknowledging

that Leonora alone was formed to constitute his felicity.

Leonora dissembled her rising indignation, and told him such discourse but ill-befitted his rank and her circumstances. She then mildly represented how much he wronged his amiable lady.

I allow, added he, interrupting her, I allow her all the merit her exalted worth demands, but heaven never formed us for each other; disparity of years and dispositions never can be productive of happiness. Love was never thought of by either, we behave with mutual complacency, and she has no reason to complain; I on the contrary, susceptible of every soft impression, I feel acutely the power of beauty inshrined in the form of virtue. From the moment I beheld you in the forest, my very soul was yours; but nothing less than my dread of Sancho's lawless power should have wrung the secret from

from my lips. Tell me then, adored Leonora, make me the happiest of men, by declaring, that were I at liberty to offer you my hand as well as heart, you would not refuse the offering.

Leonora could listen no longer. Base insinuating monster, cried she, is it thus thou wouldst draw me in to participate thy crimes? Were I capable of such a black avowal, the days of my unhappy friend would not be many. Thy various schemes of iniquity have found the light; by me they are all known!—who murdered the venerable Mendoza—who accused his virtuous wife of a foul deed, that even a demon might have shuddered at!—and, lastly, by whose hand fell the gallant Carlos! Tremble for thy last, thy black account, and cease to persecute one who equally despises thee and thy hateful master. She then galloped off to the castle with the swiftness of the wind, leaving Gonsalvez in some perplexity. He was

not at all surpris'd at her anger, that he had foreseen; but her knowledge of his crimes startled him, and he saw at once the necessity of subduing his love, and dispatching Leonora, with whom he determin'd to keep no measures. Having made this resolution, he return'd to the castle, and went straight to the apartment of Felicia; he ask'd her sternly, if she had seen Leonora.

Being answer'd in the affirmative, he bit his lips, and told Felicia she must instantly set off to the castle of De Carma; in order to elude the suspicions of Sancho. And Leonora, said she —— has oblig'd me this morning, rejoined Gonzalvez, yet I would wish to serve her against her will; I shall only punish her perverseness by a temporary separation from you. I am going to give orders for your journey, and if you would oblige me, see not Leonora before your departure

The

The Countess de Carma was thunder-struck. The pretence was too flimzy for her not easily to conceive its meaning, and her husband's designs, in all their most atrocious colours, stood revealed before her. Notwithstanding his prohibition, she hastened to the apartment of Leonora, whom she found buried in a profound melancholy, which she endeavoured to check at the approach of Felicia, and essayed in vain to conceal the tears which flowed incessantly down her cheeks. Hide not your emotions, my lovely girl, said the Countess de Carma, embracing her, it does you too much honour to be repressed. She then related the peremptory commands of her husband, and exhorted her to make her escape as speedily as possible, giving her at the same time a large purse of gold, and some jewels, to enable her to effect it. Leonora was plunged into despair; she saw all the horrors of her situation redoubled by this cruel separation, and she

doubted not but that Gonsalvez's intentions were of the blackest dye.

Whilst the two ladies were bewailing their mutual misfortunes, the author of them entered the apartment. He loaded Donna Felicia with every reproach rancour and calumny could suggest, and without permitting her even to embrace or speak to Leonora, hurried her out of the castle.

Leonora was left to herself the remainder of that day; she took a slight and melancholy repast, and finding the whole castle neglected and deserted, she walked out, in order to try if there was any possible means of escaping.

She had scarce got without the gate ere she perceived herself watched by a man, whose features at a distance she thought were not unknown to her, but concluding him some villain, accessory with De Carma,
she

she turned away her head in disgust. She wandered to the sea-shore, and her woe-worn imagination occupied itself in beholding the dreadful surges beat with impetuous force against precipices so rugged that no boat could venture within a certain distance; all hope of escape on that side was at an end, and the distance from Leon, where Pedro, Alvarez, and all the other friends of Mendoza most probably were, drove her to the very gulph of distraction. Overpowered with grief, she sat down on a crag of the precipice, and wept bitterly; night approached, yet the sad Leonora thought not of returning; the castle and the owner of it were equally forgot, and she would probably have remained a long time in that spot, if the Count de Carma, who had watched her with impatience, had not presented himself before her; at the sight of him, recollection seemed to return with redoubled force, and starting up, she endeavoured to throw herself from the rock into the

sea. Gonsalvez caught her by the robe, and gently restrained the effusion of her transports. Ah, Leonora, said he, am I really so detestable? Has my unhappy passion given rise to this desperation? Mitigate a little of your rigor, I am not to be contemned with impunity.

Leonora darted a look of scorn at him, but disdaining to reply, walked with a slow and majestic step, back to the castle, where she shut herself up in the part allotted for her use; here she could give free scope to her tears and complaints. For three days she remained in quiet seclusion, nor did her persecutor dare to violate the chosen sanctuary of Leonora's solitude; so true is it, that virtue, though oppressed by vice, can still awe it by well-timed exertion.

Gonsalvez was not however idle, but prepared to carry Leonora off into the mountains of Leon, where he meant to secrete

secrete her, and induce Sancho to believe she had escaped. In that solitude he hoped to complete his vicious purposes, and leave the unhappy object of his desires to mourn her supreme state of wretchedness.

Leonora continually questioned all the attendants respecting the Countess de Carma; they all were, or appeared, entirely ignorant. She was sitting the fourth evening, absorbed in thought, and pensively regarding the window from whence she could see the gardens where in happier days she had enjoyed so much pleasure; the remembrance awakened every soft and every painful sensation——directly beneath her window was a court of the castle, in which she saw a man muffled in a cloak, who shewed her a letter almost breathless; with joy she opened the lattice, and by means of a cord drew up the billet, which the unknown hastily fixed to it, adding in a low voice, “Be firm, and fear nothing.” Impatiently she tore it open, and found

found in it two keys, and these words, "Leonora, the hour of your preservation from the dangers which await you is at hand, if you have courage enough to take these keys and employ them properly; the smallest will open the outer door of your apartment (which is locked every night, and the key taken to De Carma) crosses the gallery, at the end of your closet, descend the back stairs, traverse the court, and by the side of the chapel next the great gates you will find a small door, open it with the other key, and be not daunted; you will find a friend to guide your future steps. The search of Don Carlos is stopped, attempt not to proceed, as the discovery of that place would be fraught with horror, and rejoice if ever you are carried to the fortrefs of St. Joseph."

Astonished, Leonora fancied herself in a dream; she again read the billet, and examined the two keys, which sufficiently proved

proved its reality, but the mystery was to her inexplicable. She did not know of the door described, but she resolved to merit this interposition of heaven in her favour, by trying the means it offered.

She awaited the night with the last impatience, and when she thought all were buried in silent sleep, she took a lamp, and with a trembling hand essayed the first key, which succeeding, animated her with fresh spirits; with a light and cautious step she crossed the gallery and court, but had some difficulty in finding the door, she unlocked it, and boldly entered the subterraneous passage; she had not proceeded far ere she heard her name pronounced in a low voice. Trembling and terrified she stopped, and looking round, beheld Pere St. Anthony, the venerable confessor of the house of Mendoza; he was standing by a white marble table, on which lay a dagger and a ring; on the table stood the effigy of a man in complete armour; on his lofty helm waved a fable plume,

plume, and in his right-hand he held a glittering sword. Leonora, reassured by the presence of the good old man, looked upon her deliverance as certain. He told her the moments were too precious to be lost; your fate (said he) has been hitherto mysterious, but the time approaches when you shall doubt no more. I have seen for a moment the Countess de Mendoza, she has need of all her fortitude to sustain her daily torments. She charged me with this letter to Don Carlos. My age and function prevent my seeking him, on thee the task devolves, but remember thy vow, tell him, when he has fulfilled the purport of that letter; to meet me here; tell him this, but arm thyself against his attractive virtues; thou art thyself of high descent, but yet a marriage with Don Carlos would not be equal, and few unequal matches have ever been successful. Cherish for him esteem, friendship, and admiration, but beware of love, it is a destructive flame, and should Don Carlos feel its
powerful

powerful influence, rise thou superior to its baneful passion, boldly reject his suit, it is for his interest he never should be thine, from an alliance only can he hope to regain his consequence in Spain, and surely you would not be the obstacle to impede his glory: seek him at——. Approaching footsteps hindered his proceeding. A man with precipitate haste appeared; fly, madam, cried he, you are discovered; in your agitation you have left open the door leading to the court, and the alarm is given.

Leonora had no longer the power of flight. Gonsalvez, calling aloud for lights, rushed to the entrance of the vault, and seized Leonora. A shriek betrayed her, for the obscurity was such they could not discern each other. The priest finding himself in danger of betraying the secret he had sworn to conceal, in spite of all the efforts of his companion to rescue Leonora, he dragged him back, and
clapped

clapped to the inner door, which made the vaulted roof echo like rattling thunder. Amazement for the moment suspended the power of Leonora, and the rage of Gonsalvez; servants with lights ran from all parts; [De Carma dragged his fainting victim from the subterraneous abode, which he determined soon to explore, and ordered immediate preparations for their departure. By break of day all was ready; the carriage was in the court, and Leonora struggled in the arms of De Carma, who endeavoured to force her into it. Her cries rang through the air, and a party of horsemen appeared at the gate. Gonsalvez turned to behold them, but what was his horror and amazement, Sancho was the first who presented himself! He quitted his hold of Leonora, who sunk almost deprived of life at the feet of Sancho. He raised her in his arms with the utmost tenderness, called for her women, and ordered her to be placed in the carriage already prepared for

for her, which he commanded his guards to protect as they would their lives. Leonora trembled ; the power of Sancho was scarce less to be dreaded than the violence of De Carma.

Sancho turned towards the humbled De Carma, who stood pale and abashed before him, and deprived of every resource to palliate his crimes. Wretch, cried he, is it thus thou hast rewarded the confidence placed in thee by a too credulous master ; I have present need of thee, or my own hand should search the treason that lurks in thy deformed soul. Repair to the castle of St. Michael to-morrow, but remember, the first moment I suspect thee again, shall be the last of thy life.

This threat was delivered with all the sternness peculiar to himself, and mounting his horse, he rode after the carriage which contained his lovely prize, leaving Gonsalvez a prey to despair and amazement,

ment, as this enterprize was what he little expected.

Sancho had waited with impatience for some news respecting Leonora, and often upbraided De Carma, by letter, for his delays. Business urging him to make a short excursion to the castle of St. Michael, he determined to ride over to that of Mendoza, which was not far distant, without apprizing Gonsalvez of his coming.

The cries of Leonora were not heard by Sancho without emotion. He rushed forward in the moment of despair, and saved the trembling beauty from violation. The king caused Leonora to be conveyed to one of his palaces of recreation. She found herself as if in the regions of enchantment; all were anxious to please, and every returning day brought new pleasures; art and nature combined exhausted their stores for Leonora, but all
in

in vain. Can the song of pleasure, or the varied motley dance cheer the mind overwhelmed by cankering grief? Harmony alone had power to soothe the beauteous Leonora. In the cool of the evening she often wandered through the embowering shades of those delightful gardens; her neglected tresses hung dishevelled over her shoulders, a loose robe enveloped her trembling form; with trembling fingers she ran over the strings of her harp, and in a low and mournful voice she sung these words:

Fly the treacherous cares that wait

In beauty's specious form;

Fly, ere counsel comes too late,

The charms which vice adorn.

Beneath the flow'ry chaplet's wreath

The curling serpent lies;

Afar extends its pois'nous breath;

The careless traveller dies.

Ah, Carlos, come by virtue led,

Thy bleeding country moans;

Whither, ah, whither art thou fled!

In vain it sighs, in vain it groans.

The

The melancholy Leonora had long experienced, was not in the least diminished by the remembrance of Don Carlos; she remained half reclined over her harp, one hand yet touched the strings with an involuntary movement, the other was stretched towards heaven; her eyes streaming with tears, were also directed thither, as if imploring its immediate protection; but words were denied, every faculty of her soul was suspended, and the footsteps of Sancho were unheeded by her. He contemplated her with almost adoration, but her excessive grief alarmed him. Gently advancing, What cause, lovely Leonora, said he, thus overwhelms thee with such deep drawn sorrow? Why do these pearly tears chase each other fast as drops of falling rain?

The remembrance of my woes, replied Leonora, almost in agony unknown; I relied upon the generous Mendoza; the ruin of that unfortunate house has drawn
a load

a load of sorrow on my wretched head ; it depends upon thee to raise again the drooping honours of Mendoza's name. Smile on my vows, share the heart and throne of Sancho, and I solemnly swear the day that makes thee mine, shall restore thy friends to all their wonted splendor.

Leonora's brain was agitated by ten thousand different emotions. She started, looked wildly on the king, and almost breathless exclaimed, " No, it can never be, Don Carlos would never consent ! " What of him, exclaimed the king, knitting his brow, has he a right to dictate the choice of Leonora ? But perhaps he loves, perhaps the heart of Leonora is already occupied.

A vacant smile overspread her languid countenance, reason was fled ; she drew from her bosom the portrait of Don Carlos, and holding it forth, how noble he looks, said she, how worthy of being beloved !

Twice did Sancho examine the glowing portrait, and twice he recoiled in horror, gnashing furiously his teeth, "He shall die! (exclaimed the enraged king) tortures shall wring his heart."

Recollection returned, and Leonora at this terrible menace, saw the imprudence she had been guilty of. He attended her himself to the palace, and leaving her at the door of her apartment, retired in gloomy silence. Leonora felt very ill all night, from the agitation she had undergone: morning brought with it reflexion. She recollected the tyrant's threat, and began to fear Don Carlos was in his power, and she resolved to brave the utmost indignation of Sancho, or find out the fate of Mendoza. Flatter his hopes she would not, as truth was the darling attribute of Leonora. Glorious the noble few who place their hope in their integrity; it is by truth alone the virtuous mind aspires to lasting and immortal fame.

Leonora

Leonora was a woman delicate from constitution, and timid from nature, yet virtue upheld her fainting steps. Innocence and truth shone round their darling child, and she beheld the entrance of Sancho unmoved.

Madam, said he, I come to convince you of my esteem. I shall make no comments on our discourse of last night; words, the incoherent effusions of a disordered mind, should be ever buried in instant oblivion; the only concession I shall ask in return, will be a patient hearing on a subject so dear to me. I can allow a great deal is in gratitude due to the son of your protectors, but are these considerations to be weighed against the advantages I offer you. Donna Almeria, in prosperity, once proudly rejected you as beneath the alliance of Don Carlos, but I overlook these paltry baubles: What is rank and riches when placed in competition with all-powerful beauty? Consent then,

lovely Leonora, reign queen of Leon, and let the proud Mendozas grace our nuptials; come, sure those blushes speak consent.

Undeceive yourself, Sir, replied Leonora, what I last night avowed in the moment of delirium, was certainly when my absent senses hindered my reflexion upon their tendency, but I scorn to disavow my sentiments, although you give me such ample scope. You have been pleased to pronounce my origin as mean, but I will shew you my thoughts and actions can raise me even above the proffered throne of Leon. Donna Almeria had reasons for her conduct, and far be it from me to penetrate with officious fond intrusion her sacred motives. With her son it was far otherwise; no hidden secret checked the motions of his soul, no restraint fettered his inclination, he loved, and he avowed it; at the moment he fell under your displeasure we vowed to be each others, or
live

live for no other ties. Inauspicious stars hitherto obstruct our union, but if he still lives, Spain has no honour equal in my eyes to the fond delight of being his.

Sancho was much agitated, he traversed the room, but endeavouring for composure, he at length said: You are not to learn, Leonora, that my passion for you has made me commit some imprudences cooler reason may perhaps disclaim. Can you then imagine that the suspicion you have now fully confirmed of your attachment to a traitor, the sole remains of a house I abhor, can make me relinquish any purpose my passion may have suggested? No, on the contrary, it will give it tenfold force. You have hitherto experienced submission and indulgence, but if you are still determined to refuse me, expect the contrary.

Leonora was not intimidated. If, said she, the knowledge of those invincible

ties heaven has placed betwixt us has no weight with thee, I cannot expect that any arguments I can use will influence or soften thee ; but remember, Sancho, Leonora will be heard when all thy glories will be sunk to nothing, and justice alone rear the avenging balance. Her wrongs, and those of the family of Mendoza, shall appeal to her unerring doom. As she spoke, her form grew more animated, her eyes sparkled, and the guilty monarch stood abashed.

Observing his confusion, she continued — Ours are but private wrongs, but think of thousands that will assemble to charge thee with theirs united. Ah, may the day of horrors be granted thee here, may Alphonso —

Sancho started : Hold, cried he, be dumb, nor raise the very fiends to aid thy cause ; spare the dreadful image, more
terrible

terrible than the inmost regions of hell can furnish. Away! —

Leonora heard no more, as he burst from her apartment in the utmost confusion. She remained three days without seeing him, in a state of infinite anxiety; at the end of that time, one of the officers of the palace came to her and informed her, that the king was gone to Leon, and had left orders with him to convey her to another habitation. Always impressed with the hope of escaping, she arose immediately, and followed her conductor. He placed her in a litter, and they travelled some days; at the close of the last day they halted at an old fortress, surrounded with a moat, and flanked by many towers. The height of the walls was tremendous, and pained the aching eye to measure them; in some places large fragments had fallen down, and the chasms were filled with ivy. Owls and bats innumerable fluttered round the moulder-

ing battlements, and shrieked harsh notes of mournful misery. With a dreadful crash the drawbridge fell and admitted the weary travellers; as they passed it, Leonora's fortitude forsook her, she burst into tears, and asked her attendants what place she was entering. The name, Madam, must remain unknown to you, said her conductor, but it is a fortress kept for the reception of state prisoners; its strength has resisted the united efforts of time and war; and here it is the king's pleasure that you remain strictly confined.

Merciful Heaven! exclaimed Leonora, what have I done to merit such persecution? Ah, Carlos, dearly does Leonora purchase the delight of loving thee.

She was conducted through several courts, in the midst of which were fountains, and the architecture of which bore evident, though faint marks of Moorish splendor. The inside of the castle corresponded

sponded with its gloomy appearance from without. The apartments of Leonora were large, dark, and horrid; the furniture bore some traces of grandeur, but the greatest part was unfit for use; the gallery in which she was allowed to walk, was hung with tapestry relating the Moorish and Spanish wars. She soon distinguished the achievements of the great Mendoza, and that picture always caught her wandering eye. The country around, as far as it could be traced, appeared to have been once cultivated, but seemed now totally deserted, wretched and forlorn. A small chapel joined to the gallery, there Leonora performed her devotions, and oft at the solemn midnight hour would piously pour out her oraisons for her departed friends. Two apartments, this gallery and chapel, were the limits of Leonora's prison; women were appointed to wait on her, which had doubtless received their instructions; they appeared extremely communicative. One told her the countess De Carma was dead; the other that

Donna Almeria was in the inquisition, and after much preparation, added, that Don Carlos was alive. The heart of Leonora now bounded with joy, but it sunk again upon hearing that he was wasting his time in inglorious ease at Saragossa, where he had been captivated by the charms of a lovely Moor.

The web was too thinly spread; Leonora felt a pang, but it was momentary; the artifice detected itself, and she rejected the base information.

Sancho in the mean time was not idle, he wished to intimidate Leonora, as submission had gained him nothing. He hated the house of Mendoza, but he wished De Carma to be involved in its ruin. For this purpose he had gone to Leon and sent for Gonsalvez, to whom he told so artful a tale as deceived even that wily statesman. He told him danger had entirely obliterated the impression of the moment;

moment; that the house of Mendoza was the cause of all his misfortunes, and he could not reckon his love for Leonora as one of the least. But in fine, he offered De Carma all the estates and honours of Mendoza, and the immediate possession of Leonora, to dispose of according to his pleasure, if he would once more prop his tottering throne.

De Carma hesitated; the service was easy and the lure tempting, but yet he doubted the sincerity of his master; but Sancho plucking the royal signet from his finger, bid him take that as his passport to the prison of Leonora. He then closed with all the conditions, and began his assigned task, by endeavouring to quiet the mind of his master. He represented to him the little probability of Carlos ever disturbing his tranquility more. He outwardly succeeded, but the specious tongue of De Carma could not calm the inward suggestions of conscience, which ever and

anon whispered to the harrassed mind of Sancho the most cruel upbraidings. Waking, he heard, or fancied he heard, voices which incessantly repeated his crimes, and denounced the wrath of heaven ready to burst on his devoted head. Sleeping, the murdered forms of Alphonso and his queen perpetually haunted his imagination; he would frequently start and exclaim, "Stop the red arm of slaughter! it is my king, my kind, my benevolent master!" then groan, and add, "It is, alas, too late!"

Actuated by different emotions, but the same purpose, Sancho and Gonsalvez took different roads to the prison of Leonora.

Leonora, unconscious of any impending evil, spent her time sad and cheerless in her gloomy prison; books were denied her; tears and devotion divided nearly her days, and partly engrossed her nights. One evening, being more than usually oppressed, she went as usual to the chapel,
and

and remained a long time prostrate before the altar. Already the midnight watch had past; the taper gave a glimmering light, and Leonora was preparing to retire, when she heard the footsteps of a man in the adjoining gallery. Alarmed at so unusual a thing, she started; her limbs failed her, and she had not courage to speak; she heard it no more, and her tears began to subside; she ventured a few steps, the noise hastily approached; terrified beyond measure she sunk down at the foot of the altar. A mild voice bade her rise; she looked up and beheld the king. Her terrors, far from being diminished, seemed to increase at his presence; he raised her up and told her to be calm and listen; time, added he, presses fast: in an unguarded moment, blinded by rage, I have given you up into the power of De Carma; he will be speedily here, and nothing but an immediate marriage can save you; haste then, quickly receive my vows, and give me a right to protect you.

Leonora

Leonora clasped her hands in silent agony, she raised her supplicating eyes to heaven, in all the energy of despair. Sancho raised her from the ground, he intreated her to resolve.

Ah, save me! cried she at length; if ever humanity found a place in your bosom, save me from De Carma; but, added she in a firmer tone, and fixing on him a look of anguish, do not be deceived, I never, never can be yours!

Sancho's rage burst forth unbounded, he threw the trembling Leonora from him, he would be obeyed, or leave her to her fate. On her knees she supplicated his protection; ah, cried she, for pity's sake do not reject me, do not abandon me to the brutality of De Carma. Say then you will be mine. NEVER! and she fainted at his feet.

Sancho

Sancho was quick in conception and bold in execution; he knew Gonsalvez must be nearly there, and he had already predetermined he never should have Leonora. Profiting therefore by this moment of inanimation, he caught her hastily in his arms, and proceeded down a few steps, which led into another wing of the fortress far distant from the other. He called one of her women, and ordered her hastily to fetch a few necessaries, and be cautious no one observed her.

Leonora, when she came to herself, was astonished to behold herself in a cold and miserable apartment; the furniture partly decayed by damps, and the rain beating in through many apertures of the decayed ceiling. The king was kneeling by her and assisting her woman in endeavouring to recover her. He soothed her tenderly, and requested her to pardon him the horrors of her present situation, as it was the only place likely to secure her from De Carma.

Carma. I must withdraw, continued he, my presence might hazard all; but in a short time, expect me here, and may gratitude influence the return I hope for. He bowed and retired.

Leonora, once more delivered from impending danger, felt all the lively gratitude, which might be expected from a young and susceptible heart; she flattered herself that Sancho's generosity would triumph over his passion, and give her the liberty of sentiment she so passionately wished for. Pleased with this thought, she lay down on her miserable bed, and the dawn appearing, she with confidence resigned herself to repose.

Meantime the other part of the castle, or rather fortress, was in the utmost confusion. The count De Carma was arrived; the gates flew open at his approach, for he was more known in this place than Sancho; here all obeyed his will; here
the

the honest man who dared oppose the lawless invader of his rights, groaned his last beneath the tortures of De Carma. Here the virtuous maid, whose inclinations remained proof against his arts or lavished treasures, suffered the last efforts of brutal rage, and languished a short life of misery. The victims of Sancho and his minister were here confounded, and the walls of this castle were the witnesses of their guilt, and the woe of many.

Gonsalvez could not dissemble his joy at finding Leonora was in this place of security. He hastened instantly to her apartment; but what a sudden change! his lofty hopes were at once blasted; the rooms were void. He searched, he called aloud on Leonora, but no one answered. The chapel door was open; again he called, and the loud distant echo murmured Leonora. De Carma started! conscious guilt writhed his heart, and he fancied it a sound more than mortal; scarce

scarce could his tottering limbs support him to the altar, the taper yet faintly glimmered, and with a hollow groan he fell on his knees before the altar. Yes, the man of blood, the man of every vice, dared sacrilegiously, in the moment of mental fear, prostrate himself before the altar of his God. Penitence for the past could not obliterate the guilt of his present purpose, that was fixed and unchanged; the dawn inspired him with fresh courage, and catching up a black veil, spotted with silver, which Leonora had dropped in the chapel, he proceeded to seek farther; the domestics, the soldiers, her women, all underwent an examination, but none had seen her; he ordered her women into close confinement, and sent parties of soldiers all round the adjacent country to seek the lovely fugitive, in the king's name, offering large rewards to those who should find her. Incapable of repose, her image tormented him day and night, and he remained some days at the castle on the rack
of

of uncertainty. An express informed him, that regardless of the truce, the Moors were hastily advancing towards the frontiers of Saragossa : he was obliged to oppose them, but left the strictest orders respecting Leonora if found.

Meantime, great events were labouring into birth. Virtue had been heard in heaven, and received the award of omnipotent justice.

The morning after Leonora had been brought to her present horrid abode, a strange officer belonging to the castle, presented himself before her ; he charged her to be silent, that the least noise would betray her to the vigilant watchfulness of De Carma. She promised obedience, but expressed her astonishment to her attendant, that De Carma should overlook the part of the castle where she was.

This

This attendant was named Victoria, and had been confined many years with her father in that place. She was mild, sensible, humane, and penetrating; at her father's death Gonsalvez found it convenient to sequester his estate; and to prevent her exposing his villany, detained her in the fortress, where she wanted for nothing but the liberty of quitting it. Sancho knew nothing of her misfortunes, but hastily enquired of this minister of his will, who had now the charge of Leonora, for some person farther advanced in years, upon whom he might rely, not chusing to trust her former attendants.

Velasquez mentioned Victoria, alledging that her antipathy to Gonsalvez would make her subservient to him. He presented her forthwith to the king, who telling her in a few words his violent passion for Leonora, added, that he wanted her aid to snatch her from the grasp of De Carma. This tale artfully worded, induced Victoria

ria readily to promise her assistance, and Sancho, in token of his gratitude, presented her with a rich ring.

Such was the person to whom Leonora expressed her apprehensions, that Gonfalez might seek her even there. Fear not, my dear child, replied Victoria, in the mild accents of virtuous sympathy, heaven will protect thee and the tradition that runs concerning this range of buildings. Leonora expressing a curiosity to know what she meant, Victoria thus began :

My father was the humble friend of Alphonso, surnamed the Just ; he followed him in every vicissitude of fortune. He saw clearly the ambitious designs of Sancho, and he apprized his royal master ; but he, alas, good man, chid his suspicions, called them ungenerous, and fell the victim to his unsuspecting virtue. This was the place chosen by the vile usurper to perpetrate the act of horror ! How ! interrupted

interrupted Leonora, turning pale, was it here Alphonso perished?

Yes, continued Victoria, this range of buildings contained the royal apartments, and not daring to inhabit an abode which would every moment reproach him with his crimes, this building has been totally abandoned, and the rest converted into a state prison. The gloom and horrors which surround these decayed walls, gave rise to the absurd report of their being haunted. Certain it is, that no one has ever attempted to remain here without experiencing inconceivable terrors; nor has there in my remembrance been found one person hardy enough to penetrate beyond that door which you may see from the end of this passage; but for my own part I have no fear, and only acquaint you with the circumstance, to guard you against the impulse of sudden terror.

Nor

Nor can you, said Leonora, conjecture from what proceeds the ideas you speak of? I can, replied she, and I believe the governor of the castle is of the same opinion as myself, although he keeps up the apprehension to terrify the vulgar. Beneath these rooms are the dreary dungeons of the castle; time has made so many apertures in the walls and roof, that I am convinced these dreadful noises are nothing more than the dismal groans and clashing of chains, which are re-echoed from those mansions of horror. There, continued she, bursting into tears, there, by the order of De Carma, my virtuous, my unhappy father breathed his last. Those caves of wretchedness are known to me, I have explored their utmost limits unawed by scenes of torture and groans of anguish; I entered them to snatch a dying parent; these eyes beheld him stretched on the rack, his aged sinews burst, his quivering limbs palpitated under the hands of his butchers, and they threw him expiring
into

into his dungeon ; yet, amidst all his anguish, his virtue and the presence of his child consoled him ; he tenderly embraced me, reclined upon my shoulder, and resigned his pure and noble spirit, breathing a prayer for me.

My grief was at first loud and violent, but time has hushed my stormy sorrows into peace ; torn from my father, all wish of liberty died with him, the only remaining heiress of the once great family of Guzman. Ambition nor splendor had no charms for me ; an attempt to escape could avail me nothing ; the tyranny of Sancho, and the avaricious cruelty of De Carma, left me nothing to hope for, but all to dread. My father survived his beloved master but five years, and it is now fifteen since I have mourned his loss. My peaceful demeanour has gained me the friendship of the governor, and, though in many respects but too obedient to his dreaded master, yet he allows me many indulgences, and
connives

connives at the frequent visits I pay to the remains of a beloved parent.

Alas, said Leonora, I am not then the only wretched being within these dreary walls. Victoria replied with tenderness, soothed the melancholy of Leonora, and solicited her confidence, which was readily granted, and she found fresh reason to detest the enemy of her house; she vowed eternal friendship to Leonora, and promised to guide her inexperienced youth through the trial which awaited her. Victoria's genius had lain dormant for want of some incentive to bring it into action; left as it were alone in the world, she had no endearing tie to cherish, and had long learnt to disregard herself, she blest the haste of Sancho, which had appointed her instead of a meaner domestic to be the guard of Leonora, and she promised to attempt something in her favour.

Leonora sighed ; alas, my friend, immured so long within these lofty walls, almost unacquainted with their extensive limits, how can I hope for your assistance ?

Hope all things, returned Victoria, the good have no reason ever to despair. As she spoke, Leonora was alarmed by a violent clash of chains, which startled her, extremely deep and hollow groans followed, and even the courage of Victoria was shaken at intervals. As night closed in, the noise continued. Leonora was near expiring with terror, which a gentle knock at the door augmented ;—Ah, heavens, should it be De Carma ! Victoria bade her not fear, and opening the door, perceived a soldier, who entering, bent one knee before Leonora. She recollected the faithful Gaspar. The moment, madam, said he, I hope is at hand, in which I shall be able to serve you ; the count De Carma has just quitted the castle to proceed against the Moors under Muley Abdallah, who thinking himself

self released by Don Carlos's death from the gratitude due to that brave hero, who so nobly saved him from the power of Sancho, is marching in full force towards Saragossa. De Carma thus disposed of, we every moment expect the king, who is doubtless not far off, awaiting his opportunity to enter here unobserved; nor think he will depart without accomplishing his purpose. I know the monster well. Unhappy that I am, these eyes have witnessed his various crimes; and when most he smiles then he is most to be feared.

Have you courage, madam, continued he, to pass those dungeons which lie beneath this building? all is safe below after this hour. Beyond the fort you will find a guide and two horses, whom you may dispose at will. I will go any where, cried Leonora. Tell me not of horrors, none are equal to being in the power of such monsters. Come then, said Gaspar, I dare not remain long from my post; I will un-

bar yonder door, and point the way that you should take ; and may heaven guide you safe from the fortress of St. Joseph.

Gracious powers ! exclaimed Leonora, the fortress of St. Joseph ! Lead on, I have nothing to fear, nor will I quit it till I have explored its most gloomy recesses. Gaspar, amazed at the animation which glowed in every feature of Leonora, yet endeavoured to persuade her, that her search would hazard every prospect of success. You try in vain to dissuade me, continued she ; lead on.

The soldier paused a moment. I cannot leave you to encounter such dangers alone, said he ; my partner of the watch shares all my secrets, I will persuade him to accompany us, it will be seven hours ere we are missed, and I trust fear will hinder our comrades from pursuing us this way.

Leonora

Leonora assenting, Gaspar hastened to his friend, who was easily persuaded to accompany them. Meantime Victoria was busily employed in strengthening the resolution of Leonora.

Gaspar and his friend with great difficulty opened the door, which was rusted over by time, it led them to a large staircase, which was still magnificent. Here, said Gaspar, stopping Leonora, in this very spot fell the good Alphonso and his virtuous queen. The daring hands of De Carma and Sancho here struck the mortal blow, and crowned their black designs; in a vault beneath the stairs the wretched bodies were thrown, without the common rites of burial. He ceased, and they began to descend, but a deep groan of anguish from the vault he spoke of stopped their progress, and petrified them with horror. Holy Mary and St. Jago defend us! exclaimed Gaspar, in terror. — Another yet more piercing and a faint hollow voice pro-

nounced these words : " All-pitying heaven, have mercy and relieve me." Leonora, unable to stand, caught the arm of Victoria ; fainted spirits, cried she, in a faltering voice, may the avenging hand of Carlos soon restore peace to your hallowed ashes ! A solemn pause ensued. At length the voice again replied, " Who names the blest and the endearing name of Carlos ?" Leonora would wait no longer ; I am determined, said she, to enter that vault ; a secret emotion, a sacred impulse urges me on ; let those who fear, remain behind. She reached the door ; a deep sigh invaded her ear again. She stopped, as if irresolute ; at length, recovering her almost exhausted courage, I must on, cried she, and impetuously rushed into the vault. Struck with the spectacle before her, the affrighted Leonora started back, and uttering a groan, fainted in the arms of Gaspar, who had followed her. A dark and damp vault was before her ; on one side lay a heap of mouldering bones, on the

the other a bed of straw, on which lay half reclined the figure of a female, apparently at the last gasp. By the side of her was a pitcher of water, and from the roof of the vault was suspended a dim lamp, which faintly glimmered through the dreary mansion of death and horror. Leonora recovering, slowly advanced, still leaning on her attendant, and sinking on her knees close to the wretched female, she faintly exclaimed, is it thus we meet? Is this a fit abode for the virtuous Almeria, the descendant of Alphonso the Just!

Gracious God! exclaimed the almost exhausted Almeria, is it an illusion of my senses, or do I indeed hear the voice of my Leonora? Ah, from this moment I forget all my sufferings. She raised herself up by an effort almost superior to her strength, and threw herself into the arms of Leonora.

Ah, let those that have experienced a meeting thus unexpected, and attended with circumstances sufficiently horrid to allow the transition to be of that nature as to be decisively from the depth of misery to the very summit of happiness, let those judge of the sensations which actuated the souls of Almeria and Leonora, at this moment ; they wept ; their tears were those of sensibility and delight. Victoria and the two centinels bore their share of this affecting scene.

After a few moments given to joy, the remembrance of their present situation recurred with redoubled force, and they looked at each other, afraid to advise, and yet convinced they had no time to lose. At length Almeria, with a sigh, pressed the hand of Leonora : leave me, my love, pursue the track fortune has opened before thee ; heaven doubtless guides thy steps, nor will it ere forsake thee ; the sufferings of thy parents will be rewarded in
their

their offspring, and the knowledge of thy safety will smooth my last sad hours.

Never, cried Leonora, in enthusiastic energy, never will I abandon you in this distress! Victoria interrupted her by observing, they must be gone, and proposed that the two soldiers should support the countess to some cavern in the wood, where they might be concealed till a conveyance could be brought.

The countess suffered herself to be led forth. As she past the sacred relics of her beloved friends, she stopped, and clasping her hands, adieu, ye dear remains, cried she, and may your souls look down from their abode of bliss, and behold the piety of this beloved child; bless and protect her, and may the all-powerful hand of heaven lead us forth safely from the power of cruelty and ambition, and shew that though thou art slow to punish, yet that thy justice is unerring.

They carefully closed the door of the vault, and with wary steps trod the dark mazes of these direful dungeons. Groans and sighs ever and anon impeded their steps; Leonora's humanity could scarce suffer her to pass without endeavouring to alleviate their woes, but Gaspar and Victoria hurried her on. As they passed three rows of caves, formed by the vaulted arches which sustained that vast mass of building, Lopez, the friend of Gaspar, stopped at the last and most hideous; here, said he, we may perhaps find some whose liberty will avail us much, for if I recollect right, here are some soldiers and valiant knights, which have been long confined.

Joy animated the almost decaying strength of Leonora; let us search, said she, perhaps Don Carlos may be amongst them. Lopez opened several of the caves, but all were void and dark. Here, at least, cried he, I am certain there is a prisoner, for a few days ago I brought him
food.

food. He exerted ail his strength to force the maffy bars, but in vain, fuperior force from within feemed to oppofe itfelf to his. In vain he called and to d that they were friends; no one fpoke, all was filent as the grave: and fearful of being heard by the centinels that watched the entrances above; difappointed and difpirited, the little party continued their walk for above a mile under ground; here they found fome difficulty, and the ladies were obliged to fit down till their two faithful adherents had with infinite pains opened them a paffage through the brambles into a thick wood.

Here they paused a moment; Almeria grew weaker, and Leonora wept even to anguish at the delay occafioned by her indisposition. Victoria attempted to foother, but all her high raifed fortitude, all her hopes of expectant happinefs fled at the found of a fudden alarm in the fortrefs; and the fight of a party of foldiers haftily

issuing from its walls. Leonora clasped her mother in her arms, and Victoria hid her face with her veil. Gaspar and Lopez drew their swords, and stood upon the defensive.

At first the soldiers did not perceive them, but at length calling to each other, they rushed upon the defenders of the trembling ladies with amazing force. Ere a blow could reach Gaspar, who stood the foremost, two knights flew from the neighbouring thicket, and stood between them; they were clad in ancient Moorish armour, and their helmets down. Blow followed blow with such rapidity that the party from the fortress of St. Joseph began to give way, and seek a retreat, but on turning round they found themselves intercepted by many soldiers, who had taken post for that purpose. One of the knights in a loud voice, commanded them, if they valued their lives, to throw down their arms, which was instantly complied with.

Meantime

Meantime the other stranger gently raised from the ground the Countess de Mendoza, he silently placed her on a bank, and returned to his companions, the latter immediately addressed the ladies, congratulated his own good fortune, and that of his friends, in having been instrumental towards saving them, and calling for a litter, which some of his followers led, he assisted Almeria to enter it; Leonora was following, but turning to Victoria, she suddenly exclaimed, I am undone, or rather you have ruined me for ever, by just now unclasping my gown to give me air; I have lost that precious letter I would have died to preserve; Victoria assured her she would search for it; but the stranger knights intreated to be allowed that permission; slow and sad therefore moved on the lovely mourners, surrounded by friends and foes, the two brave knights loitered behind, and they travelled some hours without stopping; at length the knight, who had always addressed

dressed them, came up with the litter, and bowing respectfully to Leonora, the letter which so much agitated thy breast, beautiful Spaniard, has been delivered to a friend of Don Carlos, and Don Pedro has sworn to obey its purport; calm thyself therefore, and permit me to ask whither we shall conduct ye. Almeria sighed, alas, said she, any where, so that my Leonora is safe from the lawless cruelty of Sancho. The knight retired a moment to consult his friend, and the ladies almost as soon beheld the latter gracefully salute them, and gallop out of sight; the former returned, my friend, said he, is obliged to join Muley Abdallah, who leads the Moors against those walls he lately lost. Here, madam, is your letter, Don Alvarez has read it, and by me restores it to your charge; rely on me, and suffer me to guide you to a place of strength. Leonora bowed her thanks, and taking the open letter, read as follows.

“ If

“ If the last injunctions of an almost dying parent, can have any farther influence over the mind of Carlos, let him obey them with exactness. Parent, did I call myself; yes, in one instance I have proved myself even more ; but past retrospections are painful. Carlos, beloved of my soul, watch well thy opportunity and rescue thy bleeding country ; let the great name of Alphonso the Just, stimulate thee to avenge the murder of so benevolent a prince ; seek the assassin on the throne of Spain, speak to him in thunder, execute the vengeance of heaven, and call the survivor of Alphonso to the throne he merits, for by the providence of unerring justice, there is yet one in being ; pity my fate, and protect my Leonora.

Adieu,

ALMERIA.”

Leonora, when she had ended, caught the hands of Almeria, and suffused it
with

with tears. Ah! madam, said she, what sufferings has yours been; they are all ended now, returned the Countess, embracing her.

Their guides now halted, and to the utter surprise of the ladies, the strange knight drew up the unarmed soldiers, which he had brought from Fort St. Joseph, and thus addressed them; Fellow soldiers, I have tried your valour and approve it well; yet permit me a few words, after which every man shall have full leave either to follow me, or depart. I know not whether any among ye remember, or esteem the good Alphonso, the best of kings; but if ye do, my praises are not needful. All Spain has thought he fairly fell by chance of war; but I can well assure ye, that the man which now wears his crown, the same guided the too steady dagger to his guileless heart; yet heaven has saved an heir, a descendant of the great Alphonso; armed with vengeance
in

in his cause, Don Carlos comes, he heads the Moorish army, none dare oppose his dauntless valour, and heaven will crown the enterprize——He was here interrupted by a general shout, and the cry of “ We will follow you, and avenge our good king.”

Finding them fitted to his purpose, he stretched his hand toward the litter, and continued, Shew then your attachment, by protecting the mother of Don Carlos, and the virtuous Leonora, who has withstood the wiles of Sancho and his ministers; if ye are so disposed, follow me; he marched on, and all to a man, throwing their caps into the air, followed with loud acclamations to the Castle of Mendoza, whither he conducted them, it was forlorn and desolate; but the return of their beloved mistress was soon announced, and all her vassals flew to arms to serve her.

Almeria

Almeria retired with Victoria, and left the care to Leonora of thanking her good dependents; the stranger knight, pulling off his vizor, proved to be Don Pedro himself; how, said he, bending one knee before Leonora, dare I to present myself before you without Don Carlos; but he is serving his beloved Leonora. What, interrupted she, does he indeed live! Yes, madam, continued he, and with your permission I will relate his sufferings, and by what means he obtained his release. Leonora bowing assent, he seated himself, and proceeded; you are doubtless acquainted with the adventure of the wood, which deprived you of Don Carlos. I quitted Leon when informed of it, and with Don Alvarez and a few friends, ranged through the greatest part of Spain in quest of him, fully persuaded that he was detained forcibly in some place of confinement; I passed whole days in wandering round the different castles belonging to the king; almost despairing of success, I determined
to

to punish the tyrant, whom I now secretly accused of having privately destroyed him. I fled to the Moorish court, I told my tale with all the energy of friendship to Muley Abdallah, his obligations to Don Carlos were not forgotten by this generous Moor, and he without hesitation promised me all the strength of his aid ; in a short time, all was ready, we marched on towards Saragossa, from whence came many deserters, one of them told me that he had served at the fortress of St. Joseph ; I asked him if there was many prisoners confined there, and learnt that they were numerous ; but judge, madam, of my joy, when the man assured me Don Carlos was amongst the number : fearful of a mistake, I made him give me an exact account, which he did nearly in these words. “ We were one night summoned very late, to open the gates, by a party of soldiers that brought in a wounded prisoner, he was laid in a very good apartment, by the governor’s order, and well attended till his recovery

was

was ascertained, we were then summoned to carry him to one of the dungeons, and received orders to chain him to the floor, and guard him strictly ; he heard all with contempt, and did not speak a word till he saw some Spanish soldiers in a cave we were obliged to pass ; he then burst forth into indignant exclamations, he embraced them all ; alas, my brave, my worthy friends, has your attachment to so wretched a being as Don Carlos, brought on ye so severe a punishment : has the tyrant forgot your gallant deeds at Saragossa ? Alas ; why do I waste a thought on him ; where is thy judgments, heaven ; does thy unerring thunders sleep ? Behold the descendant of Mendoza calls on thee for vengeance, confound the traitor and give him to my rage. Exhausted, the wretched Don Carlos beat his head against the walls and stunned himself, which gave us time to convey him to his dungeon. For some days we obeyed the orders of our governor ; but human nature could not bear
such

such a refinement of cruelty : when Don Carlos was a little recovered, he was every day dragged forth, and some one of his faithful domestics tortured, or whipped before his face ; I have seen him writhe himself in anguish, and utter groans sufficient to penetrate a heart of steel. We were unanimous, and positively refused to obey orders so savage; upon this the troop to which I belonged, was ordered to Saragossa; but I trust there is not in human nature to be found, those that will obey the infernal ministers of Sancho."

I rewarded the soldier's humanity, and farther learnt, that the troops were in general disaffected.

Presuming upon that, I sent a small party to take possession of this castle, and selecting our common friend Alvarez, and ten others equally resolute, we secretly left the camp before Saragossa, and by midnight marches reached the wood of
St.

St. Joseph ; impatient of delay, I left my friends, and advanced to survey the fortrefs. The soldier exactly delineated to me the spot amongst the ruins, and told me of some cavern, which it was supposed had formerly been a mine ; my eagerness could not permit me to lose any time, upon the supposition of a practicable entrance, and observing a place where the wall was much fallen to ruins, and the moat was narrow, I pulled off my armour, and followed by my faithful guide, swam to the fortrefs ; we concealed ourselves behind some rubbish, and awaited the rising of the moon ; that planet, as if we were befriended by heaven, seemed to shine forth on that propitious night with redoubled splendour, we clambered over the ruins, sometimes nearly immersed in water, at others borne above it ; at length we perceived a small aperture in the wall, my guide desired me to call in a low voice, for he was persuaded we were not far off the wished for spot ; I did so, and was immediately

mediately answered ; we were obliged to work extremely hard to get room enough to enter ; but what will not the energy of enthusiasm attempt ! at length we effected our purpose, and with heartfelt joy, I embraced my friend, I held him in my arms, the big drops rolled down our cheeks, and we felt at that moment all the sympathy of exalted friendship.

When our mutual transport had a little subsided, I beheld with horror the situation of this once all conquering hero : he was bound to a large pillar, pale, emaciated, and almost worn down by despair and affliction ; rage and determination gave me almost tenfold strength, the iron chain burst beneath my efforts, and Carlos once more felt himself at liberty ; in a few words I acquainted him of my proceedings, and propose joining our friends without farther delay ; but Carlos is all hero, he would not leave his brave companions to sustain all the displeasure of his
cruel

cruel oppressors, guided by our deserter, we entered their damp and loathsome cave; three had breathed their last, the rest we released, they fell at our feet, and I sincerely believe, had we attempted it, and our brave soldiers had been properly armed, the Fortrefs of St. Joseph might soon have been reduced; even as they were, they would, if bidden, have rushed forward, and gladly exposed their lives for their beloved leader.

We fastened the cave withinside to cause delay to the garrison. I silently, ere the grey dawn had tinged the orient east, returned to our rendezvous in the wood, we remained hid there all day, and Carlos, the moment night appeared, with half our little force, took the road to Saragossa; in the Moorish camp friendship and honour wait him; misguided Spain shall feel his error, and through seas of blood we will reach the heart of her tyrant.

Pursuant

Pursuant to our consultation, I was to establish a garrison in the castle of Mendoza, erect there the standard of defiance, and summon all the ancient adherents of Alphonso to resist the tyrant, and restore his equitable laws. This night, as we were preparing to march, a centinel informed me there were five persons seemingly in distress not far from us. Humanity would not suffer us to proceed, without endeavouring at least to alleviate the woes of others. Scarce had we approached, ere I saw soldiers, and guessing ye were some like us, escaped from tyranny, we flew to assist and save ye; fortunate was the event. I found the letter ere I knew those whom we had rescued; I imagined not how it came there. I called for a light and read it; Alvarez at that moment came up, and told me who ye were, and your distress for your supposed loss. I thought proper to detain the letter, and send him to bear its purport to Don Carlos; the original will shew the people we are no rebels,

but it is in a dear master's cause we draw the avenging sword.

Ah, with what transport will Don Carlos receive the joyful tidings ! What a moment that which restores him at once to fame, to liberty, to life, and love ! Leonora enraptured, expressed her high sense of Don Pedro's noble deeds, and retired to seek the rest necessary after all her fatigues.

But the indefatigable friend of Carlos visited every post ; examined the fortifications of the castle ; and disdaining repose in the cause he had embarked in, was found by the morning yet watchful, yet unrefreshed. A few days restored Almeria to health, but not her usual strength or spirits. Worn down by fatigue and overwhelmed by distress, it was long, very long, ere she could summon resolution to tell her darling Leonora all she had suffered. But what was the sorrow of
that

that affectionate daughter upon hearing that she had caused the scene to which she had been witness, and from which her pious courage had so nobly rescued the ill-fated Almeria.

The countess related every particular respecting her imprisonment, and concluded thus : I thought my first abode in a lofty turret of the fortress sufficiently horrid, and had often need to exert all my fortitude to bear it. I frequently questioned my jailer, but could obtain no satisfaction concerning you or Don Carlos. My trust in providence alone preserved me from desperation.

One evening, rather late, as I was ruminating on my misfortune, and listening to the different noises which re-echoed from all sides, I was astonished by a hasty and unequal footstep fast approaching to my door. Hope raised a phantom in my breast, destined to be overthrown by de-

spair. I beheld by my feeble light Sancho; he stood before me; his hair and his demeanour manifested his extreme disorder. He hesitated, but at length addressed me to the following purpose :

I grieve, madam, at the retrospection of what you have suffered, it gives me infinite pain, but the measure of your woes is past; henceforth it shall be my care to endeavour to obliterate them, and avenge you on your unworthy relation.

Amazed and confounded, I forgot for the moment, all the treachery and injustice of Sancho. (Yes, ye sacred spirits, I have dearly paid for my deviation from the duty due to ye) I clasped his hands in mine, I bedewed them with my tears, even in that moment nature awakened in the heart of the tyrant, and a sympathizing tear fell from his eye.

At

At length maternal solicitude got the better of my emotions, and I feebly articulated the names of Leonora and Carlos. They both live, madam, replied Sancho, and their future welfare depends on you. I see your impatient zeal; unheard you would bless me by consenting, but I wish you to deliberate ere you resolve, but let me promise that resolve, if favourable, unlocks your prison door, clears your clouded fame, and returns Don Carlos to all his honours. Speak, I cried, interrupting him, what can I do to merit such exalted favours.

Forget first, replied he, the memory of Alphonso, cherished by the house of Mendoza and Guzman. Reports and rumours have gone abroad infinitely tending to prejudice us. And secondly, plead the cause of love with the divine Leonora; her beauty has subdued a heart hitherto insensible, and your persuasion and con-

sent alone is wanting to influence her decision.

Astonished I had listened with a confusion that seemed scarce to allow of my knowing where I was; your danger was present to my view, but I now beheld the artifice of the tyrant properly displayed, but cautious not to irritate him, I replied, that my relationship and the degree of confidence they honoured me with, justified the partiality I had ever entertained for the house of the former king.

Say rather, cried Sancho, interrupting me, that, grounded on the partiality a deluded people once expressed for that weak monarch, you mean as his descendant to claim the crown you behold with envy on my head; else why the base insinuations which fly abroad? Why am I charged with the loss of Alphonso? Did I murder him?

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That is best known to thy own conscience, oh Sancho, said I; the hand which stabbed Alphonso is not known in public, but probably heaven will one day point out the murderer, then clear thyself before God and man, by vengeance. Whilst I spoke, the countenance of the usurper underwent many changes, and he evidently struggled for composure. At length he exclaimed, 'tis well, madam, 'tis very well; you are the enemy I always thought you, but yet you may redeem all; unite me to your daughter (nay, start not) the secret fell from your lips in the moment of death, as you supposed it, but I ask not the mystery why she was concealed, nor why Don Carlos was reputed your only child, with me the secret of dishonour (for such it must be) shall be ever safe. This fresh imputation struck me, Leonora, to the very heart; yet I shrunk not, but ventured to ask, if Leonora was propitious to this request. Had she, madam, replied he, more haughtily, I had not soli-

cited your interference ; but the queen of Leon in person should have opened the doors of your prison ; there seems some obstacles raised by her, which perhaps you may obviate.

Far be it from me, cried I, inspired with energetic courage, far be it from me to change the inclination, or influence the choice of Leonora. Sancho here burst forth into a violent passion, and loaded me with every horrid and opprobrious epithet. I leave you, madam, added he, to reflect ; to-morrow at this time I shall expect a final answer, but tremble at my rage if you refuse what I have condescended to ask.

After he was gone I remained some time absorbed in thought, but at length I recollected that the fortress of St. Joseph was not far from the abode of my holy confessor, and I sent an intreaty to Sancho, that he would permit that venerable man to pay me a visit. After a sufficient length
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of time, during which I suppose the good old man had been well tutored, I was made happy by the sight of him. He confirmed all my good resolutions; taught me to despise pain, and welcome as a friend the death I believed once more to be inevitable. I wrote that letter, which he promised to deliver, and also to endeavour to aid your escape from the castle of Mendoza; to his care I commended my Leonora, intreating for her his pious prayers.

Exactly at the time he had appointed Sancho returned. Alas, the generous sympathy, the noble compassion which had in the preceding evening captivated my very soul, was fled; the arch fiend himself could not have dissembled better, and like the destroyer of mankind when opposed, haggard fury and fell malice were displayed on his frowning brow.

Well, madam, exclaimed he, on entering, is it in friendship that we meet? Will

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your

you suffer me to lead you to your daughter or your prison? I was silent. He continued, what means this gloomy silence? Do you prefer the empty shadow of deceased royalty to the more solid pleasures of society, and the favour of condescending majesty?

I looked firmly at him, and replied, I thank thee for the interval allowed me to collect my scattered thoughts. Imposed upon by imaginary virtues, I last night forgot the king, and beheld only the man. Reflection has dissipated the dazzling illusion, and restored me again to my former self. Mercy I expect none, and have prepared for the worst, for never will I persuade my gentle, my innocent Leonora, to sacrifice herself at the altar of ambition, nor shall my tongue, whilst I exist, ever refrain from publishing the virtue of him whose only credulity was the implicit confidence he placed in thee, and whose only failing was ill-judged lenity.

Sancho

Sancho gave me a smile as I ended, but it was one of superlative malice. Since your choice is fixed, madam, said he, permit me to conduct you to your new apartments. He seized my hand, called aloud for the guards, and, almost convulsed with rage, dragged me down a narrow winding staircase, which led to the dungeons. We were preceded and followed by armed soldiers. At the sight of these abodes of misery, I felt my heart sicken with terror; my sight grew dim, my limbs failed me, and I fell senseless at the feet of the tyrant. On coming to myself, I was in the vault where you found me; the door was closed, and I was alone to encounter all its horrors. I lay for some hours upon my straw, revolving the past, and dreading the future, when I heard the door of my prison open with an hideous noise, and a man entered with a light, bringing me bread and water. My reason was not sufficiently re-established to look much around me; but I remember I was happy

when he left me in darkness. A very few days after Sancho himself stood before me. Are you still resolved, said he ? Will nothing appease your vindictive hatred, nor make you less cruel towards me and yourself ? Yet heaven arms itself in my favour. Talk not of heaven, interrupted I, with vehemence ; take not that sacred name to shield purposes so atrocious, that a virtuous mind shrinks from with horror. Yet, answered the tyrant, with calm derision, if I must not invoke heaven, permit me to thank all-potent love, by whose benignant influence the lovely Leonora is at this moment in my power, and under this very roof.

This was too much for fond apprehensive fears, like mine to bear ; I wept, I raved, I called on every saint in heaven to hear a wretched mother, and protect her child.

Sancho

Sancho seized my arm with a rude grasp, and exclaimed, wife of Mendoza, listen for the last time I offer thee the terms thou hast hitherto blindly rejected ; comply, and be at peace ; but if thou art obstinately bent on perseverance, I will, in my turn, penetrate the mysterious veil which envelopes thy conduct. If Carlos is not thy son, whose is he ? Answer me ; for Leonora is certainly thy daughter. Both, replied I, faltering ; both claim from me a mother's love ; ask me no more.

He paused. By heavens, if I thought —— but it cannot be —— rest here then, thou deluded woman ; but beware lest I search the secret in the heart of Carlos. And since thou hast despised the company of Leonora and thy monarch, 'tis fit thou shouldest enjoy that thou preferredst to theirs. Behold, continued he, turning the light towards a heap of bones, which the obscurity had hitherto prevented my seeing, behold the remains of those
whose

whose memories thou lovest, and of their treacherous adherents ; none ever left this cave of death alive, after being once immured within it. Farewel for ever.

I had now constantly, by my inhuman tyrant's order, a light, that I might continually contemplate the abode of death. By degrees I grew calm, and prayed daily for relief ; heaven denied, for some all-wise purpose ; but I never could repress even groans of anguish when I thought on Don Carlos and thee. It was in one of those moments of deep anguish that I heard a soft and tremulous voice reply to the accents of despair, in my grief I knew it not. Ah, Leonora, once to Don Carlos, and now again to thee has Almeria de Mendoza owed existence. Ye are both my children ; love each other for the sake of your mother.

Leonora's heart sunk at the words of
“ Ye are both my children,” and falling
at

at the feet of Almeria, conjured her to unfold the fatal secret, assuring her she had fortitude to do whatever reason and religion should dictate. The countess raised her, and repeated many assurances of her satisfaction, and her confidence in her fortitude, but waving for the present her request, begged to know what had befallen her since their separation, and how she escaped the power of Sancho.

With this desire Leonora immediately complied, and ended her relation with the account Don Pedro had given her of the escape of Don Carlos the night preceding theirs.

Almeria reflected deeply on what she had heard, and found they had yet much to contend with. She returned many sincere thanks to the brave Pedro, and advised with him respecting their future safety.

Meantime

Meantime Sancho had returned to the fortress, eager to seize upon his destined victim, when lo, he was met by the governor, who with infinite terror told him, Leonora, Victoria, and the centinels who guarded them, were all fled by the way of the dungeons; that they had instantly pursued them, but unluckily a party of knights accidentally passing, had overpowered the detachment, and they had all escaped.

In the first transports of his rage Sancho stabbed the unfortunate governor, and hastened to convince himself of the extent of his misfortune. He found all the apartments desolate, but his transports fell little short of distraction when he found Donna Almeria and all the Spaniards had made their escape. He sent spies abroad to discover where they had taken shelter, and the first news he heard was, that De Carma had been repulsed with great loss, and that Saragossa was closely invested by the
victorious

victorious Carlos, whose very name inspired courage in his troops, and filled the minds of his enemies with dismay.

Sancho began for the first time in his life to believe there was a God, and that retribution was impending over his wretched head. He returned to Leon, and sent post for De Carma. The cause of their contention thus snatched from both, they agreed mutually to forget the past, and unite more firmly than ever to save themselves from the threatening dangers from opposition: they had little to hope, as the minds of the people were uneasy and disturbed; the blessings they enjoyed under a pious and worthy monarch, recurred to the minds of many, and formed a striking contrast with the turbulent ambition and rapacious avarice of Sancho. The two statesmen knew that policy alone could save them; and danger having entirely driven love out of the bosom of the usurper, he agreed to give
up

up every future thought of Leonora, and to assist De Carma to the utmost of his power in obtaining her. This necessary sacrifice being made, to conciliate the irritated Gonsalvez, they entered into farther views, to which Sancho had some difficulty to accède, but necessity, which Gonsalvez continually repeated in his ear, enforced compliance. At the castle of Mendoza all was apprehension; every day brought news of the vast preparations of Sancho; he had seized every avenue, and no intelligence from Don Carlos could arrive.

Don Pedro was extremely uneasy; he endeavoured to send a messenger to him, but in vain, he could not elude the watchful vigilance of the troops; nor could he imagine the motives which induced Don Carlos to prosecute the siege of Saragossa, instead of advancing into the kingdom to defend his mother, and take advantage of the partialities in his favour. The coun-
tels

tes De Mendoza trembled hourly with apprehensions for her darling Leonora, and determined to make one effort at least to save her.

One day Don Pedro came to her, and assured her, that he doubted very much the being able to make any resistance against the innumerable forces which were coming towards them. The countess ascended the battlements, and saw an host indeed of foes; a herald advanced from Sancho, and demanded a parley. The countess considered that the castle could not hold out a regular siege, and therefore appointed the next morning to hold a conference with Sancho.

That night, when all was hushed, and darkness spread her sable mantle over the still earth, Almeria sent for her confessor, and then turning to Leonora and Victoria, follow us, cried she, with heroic fortitude, the hour is now come when thou, Leonora, shalt doubt no more.

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